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## ETHOS AND DIANOIA: 'CHARACTER' AND 'THOUGHT' IN ARISTOTLE'S POETICS\*

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AMONG the most exciting of philosophical discoveries is that of a fundamental unity in apparently diverse phenomena, and Greek philosophy, which here made so great a contribution, was always susceptible of a slight intoxication at the idea. If all fields of human thought and the metaphysical scheme of the universe could be shown to be aspects of the same underlying reality, then it seemed that the same concepts should be transferable from one sphere of knowledge to another and illuminate each in turn. Under the heady influence of this notion, Plato, to his pupils' consternation, had run the philosophy of poetry into a cul-de-sac. Aristotle, scientist as well as philosopher, often uses the biologist's habits of observation, induction and classification to supplement the deductive approach, so that his conclusions usually end somewhere nearer than Plato's to what was commonly accepted as empirical reality. But the unity required by metaphysical thinking had to be satisfied too, and indeed it is the common experience of scholars that no one branch of Aristotle's multifarious activity is properly intelligible without some knowledge of the whole. Aristotelian ethics, politics, rhetoric, logic, metaphysic and natural science all make their contribution to Aristotle's theory of poetry; and it is perhaps not fanciful to detect in him some peculiar satisfaction in making the same terms do duty in different contexts. To us, with the lapse of 23 centuries and all the riches of comparative literature to draw upon, it has gradually become clear that the philosophy of poetry, as a branch of aesthetic,

\* Based on a lecture delivered during the recent visit of Professor and Mrs Webster (v.p. 116) to Dunedin under the terms of the De Carle Lectureship, University of Otago.

must work out its own principles of analysis and cannot get very far so long as it keeps to concepts which illustrate the unity of all human thought. However appropriate and even profound some of Aristotle's overlapping terms of analysis may seem at first to be, however skilfully he modifies and adapts them to the realities of contemporary poetry as he saw it, they sometimes prove on closer examination imperfectly assimilated to this new context, and bear the faint, ineradicable traces of the different branch of enquiry for which they were originally devised. Yet we can often see how the peculiar characteristics of Greek poetry in Aristotle's own day gave these terms a contingent plausibility, and even propriety, which as universal currency they hardly possess. Thus for instance the new version of the metaphysical 'mimesis' theory, which Aristotle uses in order to reinstate poetry high in the scale of human activities after Plato's attacks, leads to an almost exclusive attention to the least subjective aspects of poetry: the most obviously mimetic form, the drama, gets fullest discussion and highest marks, epic comes second, with dithyramb a bad third and lyric either nowhere or subsumed vaguely under music. Now this *à priori* deduction from metaphysical principles is supported by the empirical facts of the contemporary scene, since the growing-point of new poetic life was to be found in the theatre, and Homer still remained an inexhaustible fount of inspiration, while *personal* lyric had not yet found its new Hellenistic forms, and, to judge by the trends evident at the turn of the fifth/fourth century, the intellectual content of *choral* lyric (including the choral lyric of drama) had become subordinate to the new music. Thus the theory appears as the product of a fusion of two methods of approach, the deductive and the empirical, and this fusion constitutes the essential character of the *Poetics*. To disentangle these two threads is a difficult and delicate operation, but in the process of trying we sometimes find clues to the understanding of Greek poetry and to the way it was understood by its own public.

The lines on which a subject such as poetry is to be discussed are in the Aristotelian method firmly laid down by analytic definition. Poetry has an essential nature—'mimesis', it can be classified into a limited number of 'kinds' or broad *genres* (epic, dramatic, etc.), each of which has its characteristic effect or function, and each of which can by scientific classification be subdivided into a certain number of 'parts', components, or one could say that poetry itself has a certain number of parts, which are found in varying numbers and assortments in its several kinds: thus epic has four parts, mythos, ethos, dianoia, lexis, or Plot, Character, Thought, Diction, while tragedy has these four *plus* Spectacle (opsis) and Music. Now clearly

this analysis into component parts is of cardinal importance, since a major part of the discussion is to be carried on in terms of these components. What is involved in the notion of such 'parts', and how do we determine what they are? In the order of material objects the problem is relatively simple; we can analyse the human body, for instance, structurally into head, body and limbs, or physiologically into bone, blood, skin, muscle, etc., or again chemically, and so on. In each case the analysis if properly done is exhaustive and the whole is the sum of the parts. But what do we mean by the 'parts' of tragedy? Chapter 12 of our text of the *Poetics* shoots off into a sudden digression on the 'quantitative parts' of tragedy—prologue, episodes, choral odes, etc.; and here is firm ground: these sections will add up to the whole of tragedy quantitatively considered. But the analysis which shapes Aristotle's theory of tragedy is a qualitative one; it divides poetry into its 'formative constituents,' or again (50 a 8) into the parts which 'give a tragedy its quality.' And these parts we find are precisely six in number, no more and no less—'every tragedy therefore must have six parts . . . and no more.' How are they found, and how do we know them to be exhaustive? They are somewhat schematically arranged as given, one (Spectacle) by the manner of the mimesis, two (Diction and Music) by its means, and three (Plot, Character and Thought) by its objects, but this of course does not answer the question. Aristotle expresses the result as a logical deduction—'every tragedy *therefore* must have six parts,' but the premises when examined resolve themselves into a series of statements, which are clearly meant to be self-evident, except that ethos and dianoia are rather perfunctorily derived from the fact that a tragedy represents human beings in action, and the springs of human action are two, ethos and dianoia—again a statement which can be taken to command immediate assent, at least from the good Aristotelian pupil who knows his Ethics.

How far can we agree that these six 'parts' are objectively present and are the whole of tragedy's constituents? In the first place they are not all ingredients in the same sense. Aristotle himself drops Music and Spectacle as in some way less essential; they are present in a performed tragedy but not in a read one. A read tragedy then is left with the same 'parts' as an epic poem; if the two are nevertheless not to be understood as identical forms of poetry, the reason is that Aristotle subsequently adds to his definition of tragedy the qualification 'acted, not narrated.' It is at once clear that the sum of the qualitative parts will not add up to the whole quality of a poetic form, and therefore 'part' is not altogether a good word, and 'exhaustive' is not to be too hard pressed. Of the remaining four, Diction, which together with Music is the *means* of mimesis, stands

apart from the other three, which are bracketed together as the *object*. But even these three, Plot (or Story), Character, and Thought are not quite on the same plane; we find that Plot, which alone is a direct reflection of 'the universal', is all pervasive, while Character and Thought seem to appear only in patches up and down the play; yet surely if they are merely logical and qualitative, not quantitative, 'parts', they ought not to be spatially determinable in this way. Further, Aristotle says the modern tragedians tend to produce plays which are 'characterless'. His editors are quick in his defence: 'Only relatively, of course', or 'Of course this only means, in Aristotle's own words, "without speeches expressive of character".' But the all-important question how *ethos* is present in a drama except in 'speeches expressive of character' is nowhere very clearly answered; and is it altogether satisfactory to have as an essential, major constituent of tragedy something which is liable to dwindle almost to vanishing point? The awkwardness is the less present to us in that thinking in English we are apt to let 'Character' melt imperceptibly into 'the characters', forgetting that our habit of referring to the people in a drama as 'the characters' itself originates in the *Poetics*, in that Aristotle speaks of *ta ethe*, 'the Characters', as well as of *ethos*, 'Character', though his definitions make it quite clear that he means something less by either than we mean by our terms. Still, let us keep clear of the *dramatis personae* and try what is usually called 'character-drawing', which is generally understood to be required to some minimum extent in every play and may be said to be more explicitly present in some parts than in others. But even this seems to be too wide for *ethos* in Aristotle's sense. His prescription for the ideal tragic hero is given under the heading of Plot, not of *ethos*. He restricts the word *ethos* to the moral as distinct from the intellectual characteristics of a person, the latter being constituted in the individual by *dianoia*. This however is apt to be a difficult distinction to draw. We have already seen that it belongs originally to an ethical context and its applicability to drama is not immediately obvious. Why just Character and Thought in particular? Why not reason and passion? or the material and the spiritual, or a dozen other arbitrary divisions of the human personality? For these two 'springs of human action' which 'determine the quality of a man and his success or failure' are hard enough to seize separately even in the ethical sphere, and the action that springs from them is usually one and indivisible; why then should we expect them to manifest themselves in human speech in separable quanta? If the answer is given that it is the dramatist's business to show how action is generated from these two sets of individual qualities, we might retort that what is of primary interest to the student of the

ethics of individual conduct is not necessarily a paramount claim upon the dramatist, who is representing the *interplay* of human wills, a composite action, not a series of individual actions. In fact here Aristotle seems to have been carried away by the identity of the term 'action', *praxis*, for the action of a play, and for individual 'actions' or conduct in the ethical sense. One is tempted to picture Aristotle's Tragedy as a biological entity erupting into giant 'action' as a product of its autonomous ethos and dianoia. But even if we acquit Aristotle of such fantasies, at least we can say that the dramatist need feel no obligation to answer for his quotas of explicit 'character' and 'thought', since these are only arbitrarily selected abstractions from the whole compound of personality in action which he portrays.

If however we reunite ethos and dianoia into the single concept 'character' in the English sense of personality, we get a list of three constituents—Plot, Character, Diction—which does carry some sort of objective compulsion, in that their presence is implied in the definition of drama. Words, people to speak them, and something happening to those people; these are the irreducible minimum of which a drama is composed. But to accept them as components is not to say that they are necessarily the most satisfactory terms in which to analyse drama or to determine what makes a good drama. For one thing, it is only as abstractions that they are properly separable; as soon as we begin to give them a positive content they at once become intricately involved with each other. The Plot is what happens to these particular characters, including what they say to each other; the characters have no existence except as working out this particular plot, and they are revealed, at least in read drama, solely by their words. The same applies to the dramatist's processes; he has not finished 'creating' his characters until he has put them through the whole of the action and selected every word they are to utter. And it may often happen that when we have discussed a particular drama in terms of its plot, its characters and its diction we are far from having exhausted its significance; for the *Agamemnon*, for instance, or any of Ibsen's plays of social criticism we should have to begin again from a different point of view.

These component parts, then, may enter into a general definition of drama, but for a discussion of what constitutes a good drama, or for rules of literary criticism by which to measure the achievement of a given drama or to attempt the writing of one, they are simply abstractions from which it is *possible* to set our angle in discussing the concrete whole. Other angles or starting-points may be equally or more profitable; we might for instance decide that the essence of drama is best given in terms of a relation between these components,

that it shows 'character in action', or 'conflict'. But at least the meaning of these three terms, Plot, Character and Diction, is immediately obvious to us, and if Aristotle had in fact divided tragedy into these three components we should have recognised the obvious. Actually he produces four, with *ethos* and *dianoia* substituted for Character. So long as we leave these in a vague translation 'Character' and 'Thought' they may seem ordinary and relevant enough in a discussion of a drama, but the more we pursue them, the more elusive and lacking in self-consistency they seem to become; and the chief reason is, I think, that they are concepts taken over partly from the sphere of Ethics and partly from that of Rhetoric, and never wholly brought into line with each other or with the rest of the *Poetics*. Considered under Ethics, *ethos* and *dianoia* are both part of the individual made-up, as, roughly, moral and intellectual qualities: they issue in action and determine a person's quality. But in fact only *ethos* is in the *Poetics* treated from this point of view. Psychologically, *ethos* is a more fundamental and abiding aspect of the personality than *dianoia*, which may indeed often be directed to giving others, by means of the spoken word, a misleading impression of the speaker's personality. Hence there are *ta ethe*, 'The Characters', related to individual persons, but never 'The Thoughts'. But also *ethos*, in the singular, is defined as a declaration of *proairesis*, 'will', 'purpose', or moral choice on a given occasion 'when it is not obvious' (50 b 8), where the mere course of the action is not enough for our understanding, and explicitness (in words) is required. In the *Poetics* the distinction between implicit and explicit *ethos*, though never clearly explained, is implied in those words 'where it is not obvious' and in 54 a 18 'if the words or the action reveal some moral purpose'. There is no corresponding distinction between implicit and explicit *dianoia* because as we shall see *dianoia* is peculiarly the province of the spoken word, of Rhetoric, so explicitness is its nature. No obligation is laid on the poet to make his *dianoia* characteristic of the person uttering it, because by definition what is characteristic belongs to *ethos*. It is not appropriate, says Aristotle, for a woman to be clever, and he says it in his prescriptions for *ta ethe*. The *dianoia* in the mouth of Oedipus must spring from Oedipus's situation; it is not required to be expressive of Oedipus's nature. Such is the awkward and indeed indefensible product of this dichotomy.

A divorce between Characters (in the English sense) and Plot has put many difficulties in the way of critical analysis; the divorce between *ethos* and *dianoia*, with some of the words spoken to be allotted to the one, some to the other, and some to neither, is still further from our notion of characters-in-action. Yet these distinctions

are some sort of reflection of actual differences between Greek and more modern tragedy, and indeed between Greek tragedy and the New Comedy. In Menander every speaking part is 'a character' and made to speak characteristically. In tragedy this kind of 'realistic' characterization is slightly foreshadowed in the style of speech occasionally given to anonymous humble persons like the Nurse in the *Choephoroe* or the Watchman in the *Antigone*, who are thereby typified to some extent; on the other hand, some anonymous figures, especially those Messengers called *exangeloi*, may be left deliberately blank of feature, uncharacterized; what they say simply helps to explain or push on the story. So Aristotle's *ta ethe* do not include every spoken part, but only those whose inner nature and moral choices have some effect on the action. In the good tragedy, he says in effect, there must be among the *dramatis personae* some who have ethos, in whose qualities and impulses we are interested, and who must therefore satisfy us by some degree of explicit self-declaration. Moreover, even these central figures do not always speak strictly 'in character'. Much confusion has been caused by modern critics who insist on taking every utterance of an Oedipus or Ajax or Medea as a bit of self-revelation. When it is essential for the audience to understand the full magnitude of Alcestis' sacrifice for Admetus Euripides commits the demonstration to Alcestis herself, without thereby seeking to characterize her as rapt in the contemplation of her own nobility—as a woman who would say that sort of thing, nor Admetus as a husband who needed that sort of thing pointed out to him. Von Blumenthal, in *Die Erscheinung der Götter bei Sophokles*, is assuredly astray in seeing in Tecmessa's description of Ajax's behaviour during his madness a female *penchant* for horrid details. Nor is there in Greek tragedy much analysis of motive for its own intrinsic interest, or for the sake of the completeness of a character in the round. Alcestis' self-immolation for her husband's sake is so essential to her traditional ethos, and so abundantly implicit in the action of the play, that Euripides has seen fit, in the interests of his conception of the whole shape of the play, to suppress in her speech all eloquence in the expression of loving devotion. Explicit ethos is required 'where it is *not* obvious'. Aristotle's isolation of ethos as something intermittent which should not be left out of a play but must be kept in its proper place does correspond to an actual and at times slightly bewildering feature of Greek tragedy.

To modern ears, however, the most unfamiliar and the most puzzling of these concepts is certainly dianoia. The 'Thought' of a play might perhaps suggest to us its underlying theme, where there is one, as distinct from its outer plot, or at least what the author

himself is seeking to convey as the inner *meaning* of the action represented on the stage. Such 'Thought' is most easily detachable, perhaps, where the poet has invented characters and situations to illustrate or to symbolize what is in his mind, as Ibsen in 'The Master Builder', or Shaw in 'Major Barbara', but it may also be conveyed in the new interpretation of a given story, as in 'Man and Superman', or as the story of Antigone is adapted by Jean Anouilh to demonstrate Existentialist philosophy. Some such expression of the dramatist's 'Thought' can be disengaged from each successive new form given by the Greek tragedians to the heroic myths, and is seen at its most explicit, perhaps, in the choruses of the *Agamemnon*. But Aristotle certainly means nothing of this kind; *dianoia* is given its position among the essential parts of tragedy, not as a commentary on the meaning of life, but as an essential function of the human mind issuing in action. Yet as we have seen it does not emanate from the nature of the speakers in the way that *ethos* does. What then are we to look for?

The word is used in a wide variety of senses in Greek—in almost every sense of our word 'thought', and with 'meaning' and 'intention' added. Its every-day, untechnical use appears for instance when Aeschylus in the *Frogs* (1058-9) claims that 'great thoughts must breed great words'; this is our ordinary notion of 'expressing thoughts in words'. In the *Sophist* (263 c 2) Plato defines it as a process of thinking, a voiceless dialogue of the mind within itself, and such a dialogue issues in *doxa*, an expressed opinion. Aristotle uses it in the general sense of 'intelligence' as a faculty in *Met.* 1025 b 25, and in one passage of the *Politics* (1337 b 9) it is 'mind' as opposed to 'body'. But there are one or two passages where Aristotle is using the word in a fairly general and untechnical sense which brings it nearer to the *dianoia* of the *Poetics*. In *Pol.* 1337 a 38 he says of education that it is not clear whether it should be directed chiefly to the intellect (*dianoia*) or the character (*ethos*), and in *Rhet. III* 16. 9 he contrasts *dianoia* with *proairesis*, advising the orator to let his words appear to come from the latter rather than the former, i.e. seek to appear good rather than clever. This is the same distinction as in the *Poetics*, between *dianoia* and the *ethos* which is shown in moral choices. How does this apply in the philosophy of poetry?

*Dianoia* (50 b 4) apparently comes third in order of importance of the six component 'parts'. There are three definitions:

- (1) (50 a 7) Proofs and aphorisms are its manifestations.
- (2) (50 b 11) It is used in proofs, refutations and generalizations.
- (3) (50 b 4) It is a capacity for making all the relevant *points*,

which in speeches is the function of the political art and of rhetoric.

The third of these is less different from the first two than might appear. In *Rhet.* 1355 b rhetoric is defined as the power to survey the whole range of apposite arguments to prove your point and convince your hearers. The generalization is a very important type of argument, and it is from this point of view, as a means of Persuasion (*πειθώ*), not as a bit of distilled wisdom, that Aristotle thinks of the maxim or generalization.

In Chap. 19, 56 a 33, there is a somewhat longer restatement which adds little to these definitions. [It remains to speak of Diction and Thought]. 'For Thought take what I have said in my *Rhetoric*; it belongs more strictly to that subject. To the sphere of Thought belong all the effects which have to be produced by means of the words. These effects consist of proving and confuting, rousing emotions—pity, fear, indignation and the like—and also exaggerating and minimizing. Obviously the play's action has also to be compiled from the same ingredients when it has to give an impression of pity or fear or importance or probability, only here the effect has to be obvious without explanation [is this the play as a Biological Entity again?], whereas in the words it is the speaker who has to produce it, from what he says. After all, why have a speaker if the required effect is obvious without the words?'

The reason given for this perfunctory treatment of dianoia as compared with Plot, Character and Diction is that the subject has been dealt with at length in the *Rhetoric*. Although the actual word dianoia is not much used in the *Rhetoric* in any technical sense, we find (III, 1, 7) that the art of rhetoric consists of dianoia *plus* diction in the sense of subject-matter and style, so that dianoia is in effect the whole content of rhetoric itself, and the aspects of it here summarized (in Chap. 19) are in fact a summary of that content (with one notable exception, to be discussed presently). This fact is of cardinal importance in Aristotle's interpretation of tragedy.

The insistence on the spoken word as the peculiar province of dianoia is noteworthy. The imperfect appropriateness of these concepts which Aristotle is using for the analysis of tragedy is nowhere more apparent than in the relation of the various 'parts' to the Word. Dramatic form implies that *everything* has to be conveyed by the spoken word—everything at least that Aristotle is concerned with in Plot, ethos, dianoia and Diction. But ethos (by Aristotelian definition, especially in the *Ethics*) is primarily something which a man *is*, rather than what he says or does, though both his words and his actions may be manifestations of it. Hence our uncertainties arising from the awkward distinction between *ta ethe*, The Characters, what the dramatic characters are, and their expressed ethos 'where it is

not clear already'. With *dianoia* we come to something which is (again by Aristotelian definition, this time from the *Rhetoric*) precisely the province of Eloquence, of the art of rhetoric. So the appeal here is not to the intellectual make-up of the personages as part of their nature, whether or not they come out with it in speech. The *dianoia* in a play is the eloquence of the personages, employed in putting their case on any occasion which requires it with all possible clarity and force. Their *dianoia* is the means by which an attitude of belief is produced in their hearers: they prove and disprove, exaggerate or gloss over, stir up emotions of pity, terror, indignation, calculated to influence belief. These phrases, 'an effect of plausibility', 'pity and terror', we have heard before in connection with the Plot, the chain of probable or necessary incidents generating pity and terror; yes, Aristotle seems to say, but that is not what I mean by *dianoia*, which is concerned only with the kind of persuasion that induces belief by means of *words* calculated for that end.

I come now to the one omission of which I spoke in the list of *dianoia*'s functions in the *Poetics* as compared with the *Rhetoric*. In the *Rhet.* eloquence is said to have three tasks: 'putting across', so to speak, your own ethos, rousing the desired emotions among your audience, and, its chief business, proving your case. In the *Poetics* the first of these is deliberately omitted, though in the *Rhet.* the well-timed bit of self-revelation is recognized as an influential weapon of persuasion. (How many gifted speakers from Socrates downwards have opened their case with 'I am no orator as Brutus is'). And in *Rhet.* 1395 b 13 general maxims, aphorisms, are shown to be particularly good examples of an argument which reveals the *proairesis*, the moral will, of the speaker, since they epitomize his attitude on the subject of the desirable; so if the maxims are morally edifying they make him appear *χρηστοῦθης*, a good man. In the *Poetics* the aphorism is expressly kept aloof from the moral personality and brought under *dianoia*. In fact, of course, what we have called 'explicit ethos', the ethos 'where it is not obvious', ought to be *in the province* of *dianoia*, and it is only in that province that ethos can give the illusion of separability from the rest of the personality; but it cannot be put there because of the terms of Aristotle's definitions, so the issue has to be evaded or glossed over. If it be objected that we must here distinguish between a calculated piece of self-revelation introduced for a particular end by a speaker in an agonistic scene and the ordinary ethos appearing spontaneously as it were up and down the play, the answer is that Aristotle does not in fact make this distinction, and this brings us to a central difficulty in his whole treatment of *dianoia*.

At whom is the *dianoia* of a play directed? The other characters

in a given scene? or the spectators? or both? Aristotle nowhere gives an answer or suggests that the question need arise. The whole subject is taken straight over from the province of Rhetoric and applied to tragedy without adaptation. In both, speeches are made, therefore the same rules of eloquence apply. The *Poetics* gives rules for good plot-construction, good character-drawing and good diction, but for good dianoia—'see my *Rhetoric*'. The summary of what dianoia sets out to achieve applies most obviously to scenes where there is a set debate, an agon, but not all rhetoric was agonistic. A lament, an appeal, even the careful portrayal of a situation, all require a capacity to find 'every possible persuasive point', and there is no suggestion of a difference between the reactions of the other dramatic characters and those of the theatre audience, or, what comes to the same thing, between what the poet wants to make *us* think and what the speaking character wants to make *his* hearers believe.

That such a difference is fundamental seems to us so obvious as to need no argument or illustration. But there is every reason why it should not have appeared so obvious to a Greek of the fourth century B.C. Greek tragedy is a highly rhetorical form of art, much more so in the hands of Euripides than of his predecessors, and as far as we can judge the intensifying process continued with increased momentum in the fourth century. After a plunge into the turgid flood of Senecan drama we may indeed cool our heads with relief in the poetical sanity of Greek rhetorical tragedy, but rhetoric can be good as well as clever; it can present 'all the possible points' in so far as they are 'relevant and appropriate'. Apart from the large number of scenes in the extant plays which develop into a more or less formalized agon, there are still more which are half-agonistic, monologues addressed to the chorus, speeches in self-justification even though no opponent replies, carefully reasoned expositions of a point of view, all presented as if the speaker were out to convince an unwilling or sceptical listener who might otherwise have tended to believe the opposite. The Athenian theatre-audience was the same as that which listened in the Assembly or in the law-courts whether as judges or as spectators, and it would be only natural if their receptive attitude were the same in each context, when the rhetorical technique used by the speakers was so similar. It is obvious enough that such scenes as the dispute in the *Hercules Furens* between Lycus and Amphitryon as to the relative merits of bow and spear were written for an audience that loved a good debate for its own sake; but the manner extends to less obviously rhetorical subjects, as when in the *Trojan Women* Cassandra to comfort her mother 'proves' that fallen Troy is happier than the victorious Greeks:

πόλιν δὲ δείξω τήνδε μακαριωτέραν  
ἢ τοὺς Ἀχαιοὺς. . .

She is god-possessed, she says, but for so long she will hold the frenzy at bay and produce all the arguments. Or Hecuba, again, says 'Let me lie where I have fallen', and then goes on to show in detail that her sufferings are indeed 'fall-worthy', *πτωμάτων ἄξια*, ending with the rhetorical question 'Why then do you try to raise me up?' The controversy, the appeal, and the lament have their obvious counterparts in the context of Athenian public life; perhaps not only education and force of habit but the manner of the play's performance, as a competition before judges, and as an actors' as well as a poets' competition, and the great open-air theatre-scene itself, had their part in attracting so much of the play into the same sphere, in making the characteristic utterance of the main figures this argumentative presentment of a thesis. The temptation to listen to the dialogue of Greek tragedy as to a series of set pieces with a few looser interludes must have been strong, and the temptation to write it as such was clearly growing. Small wonder then that Aristotle referred the budding dramatist to his *Rhetoric* to learn how to write tragic speeches.

A great deal of Aristotle's analysis of tragedy, in spite of his obvious preference for Sophocles, is more appropriate to a form of drama nearer to that of Euripides but still further advanced in the same line of development. It is interesting to see how far his concept of *dianoia* helps us to understand Sophocles and how far it is misleading. The great agones are there, of course, though fewer than in Euripides and more carefully built into the structure of the plot: the decks, we might say, are less ostentatiously cleared for this type of display. There are also many non-agonistic speeches thrown into the characteristic rhetorical form, where the speaker is intent on making out a case; the audience to be convinced, or emotionally influenced, may be the other stage-figures, the spectators, or his own conscience, or all three; there is no cross-purpose here, and Aristotle's equation of the poet with the professional rhetorician who wrote speeches for his clients, and of the auditorium with the stage, can do no particular harm. The Greek tragic character often asks and answers his own questions, anticipates an imaginary opponent's objections, where in later Greek comedy or modern drama some minor, 'protreptic' figure would be put up to elicit replies. Self-justification is peculiarly apt to take this form, as for instance in the speech of Ajax 457ff., beginning 'And now what must I do?' He examines the alternatives: 'Go home? Fall in battle under Troy?' He gives reasons for finding each of these inadequate. No,

he says, 'I must attempt a deed which shall show me worthy of my birth and name', and ends with four maxims or generalizations which sum up his attitude to the moral decision he is making—to take his own life. Such dianoia is of course inextricably involved with ethos, and it is significant that the most perfect examples of this compound in English literature are to be found, not in drama, but in the dramatic monologues of Browning—for instance in that work of agonistic form 'The Ring and the Book'.

Self-justification again is the note of Antigone's famous, or notorious, explanation, in the course of her last lament, of her motives in burying Polynices (904ff.). Aristotle cites this in *Rhet.* 1417 a 29 when he is giving precepts for the handling of narrative in forensic oratory. Your version of events must be full of ethos; glimpses of your opponent's bad morals (proairesis) and your own good morals must constantly shine through. Don't let it appear that your statements are prompted by dianoia; keep them on the lines of moral choice. But if one of them sounds incredible, *then* add the reason. Sophocles provides an illustration in the passage from his Antigone 'that she cared more for her brother than for husband or children (proairesis); *for* these could be replaced if lost, whereas once father and mother were dead there was no hope of another brother' (dianoia).

This is of course no use to us as a comment on this strange passage, adapted from an anecdote in Herodotus. What we find incredible is not that Antigone should have felt a duty to a brother more important than a duty to husband or children, but that she should at this point (just before her death) have chosen to justify her act on the grounds of such a preference—a purely hypothetical and gratuitous one, since she had no husband or children, and the only point of preferring a brother on the strength of his irreplaceability would be if it were a question of keeping him *alive* (as in the Herodotean version). It is the misapplied dianoia of the poet *behind* Antigone's ethic declaration and dianoetic explanation of it to which we object. It is true that Aristotle chooses his illustrations at their face value from the poets because the stories were universally known, and he is not here concerned with poetic propriety or an interpretation of Sophocles but with advice on rhetorical technique. Yet this is the treatise to which he refers the student of drama for the handling of dramatic speeches, and there is no suggestion that the objects and criteria of the one kind of eloquence are any different from those of the other. One might almost feel that this passage of the *Antigone* is an excellent illustration of the sort of passage a tragedian might write if he had followed Aristotle's teaching. At least the failure to keep these two spheres more clearly

distinct might easily become a besetting weakness in Greek tragedy—probably did so become in the fourth century B.C.

The chief inadequacy of Aristotle's formula, however, is that it takes no account of the Sophoclean irony. In how many scenes does the whole conception rest upon the sharp distinction between the two audiences, the stage and the auditorium, instead of upon their equation! When Ajax deliberately sets out to deceive the Chorus as to his intentions in retiring with his sword to a lonely part of the beach, it is to this distinction that the gorgeous rhetoric of his great speech (646ff.) should be referred, not to the character of the hero. Ajax' moral will has been indicated clearly enough in the earlier speech already quoted (457ff.), and that he should now falter in that grim resolution would be far more disturbing to our sense of the unity of his character than that he should act a whole-hearted deception. Yet he has to convince his stage-audience that he has so weakened, and all the resources of persuasive eloquence are deployed to this end, the majestic comparisons (no lesser parallels could serve for Ajax), the touch of shame, the suggestion of a solemn rite to be performed upon this malignant sword. 'Pray that my heart's desire may be fulfilled, bid Teucer look after my interests and yours, for I am going whither I must go, and perhaps you will learn that I have after all found salvation.' Every word is double-edged, and only once (667), in 'we will learn to revere the Atridae', does the mockery threaten to overreach itself. Magnificent poetry for an unworthy end? No, because every word spoken of the courses of Nature can be understood by us, the spectators, as by Ajax himself in his own heart, as true and applicable in a sense other, and more profound, than the obvious meaning they bear to his duped audience. This exploitation of 'the persuasive' on a double plane is Sophocles' method of adapting the *dianoia* of public life to the eloquence of tragedy.

# PROPERTIUS AND THE ALEXANDRIANS

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SINCE the publication in 1905 of F. Jacoby's article 'Zur Entstehung der römischen Elegie',<sup>1</sup> it has been difficult, if not impossible, to believe in the existence of Alexandrian subjective love elegy—elegy of an erotic nature, reflecting to some extent and analysing the poet's own experience.<sup>2</sup> No fragments of elegy of this type exist, the statements of grammarians such as Diomedes and of critics such as Quintilian do not necessarily point to it; while Jacoby, followed by Butler and Barber and by A. A. Day in his book on the origins of Latin love elegy,<sup>3</sup> show that apparent references in Propertius and Ovid to Alexandrian subjective elegy can be interpreted in another way. These references, according to Jacoby, are concerned with the contrast between epic and elegiac poetry in *general*,<sup>4</sup> or they refer to epigram or lyric; while there is a more definite connection of love elegy specifically with the Alexandrians, this is because of the erotic nature of Hellenistic elegy in general, or because the elegists borrowed so much mythology from Callimachus and Philetas.<sup>5</sup> Jacoby is undoubtedly correct about the contrast between epic and elegy; but his second statement is not in accord with the facts, so far at least as we know them.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, he does not altogether do justice to the very close connection Propertius makes between the Alexandrians and the erotic subject matter of his own poetry. The problem is by no means unimportant.<sup>7</sup>

## I

First, some of the things Propertius himself says, or implies, about his relation to Callimachus and Philetas. I shall confine myself in the main to the first five elegies of Book III, because these elegies form, or so it seems to me, a coherent and carefully arranged group in which Propertius tells us more clearly than elsewhere about his literary aims, and about his attitude to his own poetry.

### III, 1 begins

Callimachi Manes et Coi sacra Philetæe  
in vestrum quaeso me sinite ire nemus.

The meaning and precise translation of these lines is in doubt. For our purpose the problem is this: is Propertius saying 'permit me to enter, *after my death*, the grove sacred to your shades', or is he

saying 'permit me *now* to enter and worship your shades'<sup>8</sup>—that is, 'teach me how to write your kind of poetry'? Propertius' statements are often studiously imprecise: here, as always, we must take the whole poem into account. In it, Propertius both insists upon his present success, and aspires to future renown. He talks of the verse he writes—

quo me Fama levat terra sublimis, et a me  
nata coronatis Musa triumphat equis  
et mecum in curru parvi vectantur Amores  
scriptorumque meas turba secuta rotas. (9-12)

It is clear that he already is and has been writing this verse: his page already has brought down (*detulit*, 18) from Helicon work 'quod pace legas'; and it is this work which has won him the perhaps embarrassing compliment of emulation. So in lines 1-2 he is most probably not saying 'permit me to write in an Alexandrian fashion'—which he is already doing—but 'permit me to share your fame after my death', the idea to which he returns at the end of the poem. I do not think that the lines

dicite, quo pariter carmen tenuastis in antro?  
quove pede ingressi? quamve bibistis aquam? (3-4)

place any difficulty in the way of this interpretation: it is a rhetorical question to which Propertius already knows the answer, and gives it in lines 7-8:

A valeat, Phoebum quicumque moratur in armis:  
exactus tenui pumice versus eat.

That is, the water they drink, the inspiration they seek, is that of polished elegiac poetry, not of epic. Also, it is usually maintained that the lines

primus ego ingredior puro de fonte sacerdos  
Itala per Graios orgia ferre choros

refer to the future, to the Roman aetiological poems of Book IV. But it is unnecessary to put such a strict interpretation on 'Itala orgia', which probably means no more than poetry written in Latin, and not in Greek.<sup>9</sup>

That the kind of poetry which Propertius speaks of himself as writing is poetry written in the Alexandrian tradition, is clear from the expression 'exactus tenui pumice versus eat', *tenuis* being the customary Latin equivalent for the Greek λεπτός, a term especially associated with Alexandrian poetic theory. It is also shown by the repudiation of epic writing in 'A valeat, Phoebum quicumque mora-

tur in armis'—a repudiation which is common in Latin literature, and which goes back to Callimachus himself. (See next section.) Similarly, in line 14 'non datur ad Musas currere lata via' with which is contrasted the 'intacta via' of Propertius' own poetry, while the chariot in which the poet rides in line 11, recalls the passage in Callimachus<sup>10</sup> in which Apollo bids the poet to 'Tread the path which the wagons do not trample; do not drive your chariot in the common footsteps of others, nor along the broad highway, but along untrodden routes, even if the path be narrower'. All this is well known. But note the addition which Propertius makes: in the chariot of Alexandrian poetry his companions are the Amores. That is, love elegy and poetry in the Alexandrian tradition are implicitly combined.

There is then no real evidence that in III, 1 Propertius is moving towards a new kind of poetry, or looking forward to the aetiological poetry of Book IV. He is writing poetry in the Alexandrian tradition now, has been writing it for some time, and Alexandrian poetry is for Propertius one and the same with his love elegy.<sup>11</sup>

The next elegy begins:

Carminis interea nostri redeamus in orbem  
gaudeat in solito tacta puella sono.

The 'interea' should not mislead us. Propertius is making no distinction between Alexandrian poetry and love poetry; he is returning, temporarily, from his preoccupation with literary immortality to the particular subject of his poetry, Cynthia. 'My poems will be so many memorials of your beauty' (18). The elegy describes the power of song, which built the walls of Thebes, which won Galatea for Polyphemus, and which wins for Propertius himself the adoration of the 'turba puellarum' (10). Poetry is the only sure source of immortality for a woman's beauty; and though pyramids, mausolea, temples fall, 'ingenio stat sine morte decus'—'stands genius a deathless monument' as Pound inaccurately but forcefully translates. Thus in the last four lines Propertius passes imperceptibly from the thought that poetry confers immortality upon beauty to the thought that poetry confers immortality upon the poet himself. It is a return to the theme of the first elegy. The connection between the two poems is clear: in III, 1 Propertius talks in general terms of literary fame and literary immortality; in III, 2 he specifies more closely the kind of poetry which will win him immortality—that is, love elegy. In the previous poem, he had already made a fleeting association of poetry in the Alexandrian tradition with love elegy; we shall see how in III, 3 the two ideas are explicitly combined.

This is the celebrated elegy in which Propertius describes his

dream. He is lying on Helicon, meditating epic poetry and about to drink from the spring from which Ennius had previously drunk—the spring of Roman epic. Apollo checks him: Propertius is straying from the appointed path of his genius—

‘quis te  
carminis heroi tangere iussit opus?  
non hinc ulla tibi speranda est fama, Properti:  
mollia sunt parvis prata terenda rotis.’ (15-18)

In the last line, the ‘mollia prata’ are of course the subject matter of love poetry; the ‘parvae rotae’ refer to the delicate, miniature quality of Alexandrian poetry—*Kleindichtung*.<sup>12</sup> Apollo leads him to the cavern of the Muses, and there Calliope commands him to write, not merely elegy, but quite definitely love elegy:

‘ut per te clausas sciat excantare puellas  
qui volet austeros arte ferire viros.’ (49-50)

And she baptizes him with ‘aqua Philitea’.

Now the dream motif, perhaps indeed the whole setting of the elegy, goes back to Callimachus who, so far at least as we can reconstruct the beginning of the *Aetia*, represented himself as translated in a dream to Helicon, where the Muses revealed the contents of his poem to him.<sup>13</sup> Wilamowitz<sup>14</sup> went so far as to suggest that the whole structure of the *Aetia*-prologue might be deduced from Propertius, and that the distinction between the two *fontes*, one inspiring epic, the other inspiring elegy, is also due to Callimachus. That encyclopaedic mind did include among its other interests an interest in the source of Aganippe, according to Servius<sup>15</sup>, but Wilamowitz’s suggestion is no more than a guess. However, even without this it is clear enough, from the borrowing of the dream motif, the opposition of epic and elegy and the admonition by Apollo (which is taken from Callimachus’ prologue poem to the second edition of the *Aetia*<sup>16</sup>), that Propertius is again setting himself in the Callimachean tradition. But the poetry to which Calliope directs him is love poetry. If, as Butler and Barber maintain, Propertius meant by ‘Itala orgia’ in III. 1 the Roman *aetia* he was going to write in Book IV, and if he already had these in mind, surely he would have been more likely to keep the Callimachean setting of III. 3 as an introductory poem to Book IV, and would have made Calliope direct him, as she had directed Callimachus, to the composition of *aetia*. Clearly, he was not at this stage envisaging aetiological poetry at all: by writing like Callimachus and Philetas, he meant writing love elegy.

The next two poems, III, 4 and 5, also belong closely together.

III, 4 begins 'Arma deus Caesar meditatur ad Indos' and ends with a reference to Propertius himself. He will watch Augustus' triumph, but from the arms of his mistress. It will be enough for him to applaud among the bystanders along the Via Sacra. The form of the elegy is conventional panegyric, which required the introduction of the poet himself.<sup>17</sup> However, despite this conventional character, III, 4 serves another purpose besides panegyric. It is also a minor variation on a theme, familiar to us from Tibullus—let others pursue military glory, while I pursue my mistress.

The emphatic beginning of the elegy immediately following makes this quite explicit: 'Love is a god of *peace*; it is *peace* we lovers worship.' In III, 5, Propertius is concerned with the problem of vocation—if that is not too pompous a phrase. He repudiates a life devoted to acquiring wealth, which is the cause of wars: instead, while his youth lasts, he will write love poetry—

me iuvat in prima coluisse Helicon a iuventa  
Musarumque choris implicuisse manus (19-20)

and, when he is too old for love affairs, he will turn to the study of *rerum natura*. The poem concludes with an implicit reference to the previous elegy:

vos, quibus arma  
grata magis, Crassi signa referte domum.

In III, 1-3 Propertius was concerned to establish his values in literature; in III, 4-5 he establishes his values in life.<sup>18</sup> This, however, is a point which I wish to take up later on. Here it is only necessary to remark that for the three elegists (and perhaps also for the anonymous *turba scriptorum* whom Propertius mentions in III, 1) the question of the kind of life one lived and the values one adopted was inseparably connected with the subject matter and style of one's poetry. This is the reason for including 4 and 5 in this whole group of elegies.

It is tempting to discuss the various relations which exist between these elegies and others in which Propertius talks about his literary aims—II, 1 and 34, III, 9 for example. These express the same attitudes which we can see more clearly from III, 1-5. In them Propertius again associates Callimachus and Philetas with *love* elegy; for example in III, 9 he tells Maecenas that he will not write epic, but

inter Callimachi sat erit placuisse libellos  
et cecinisse modis, Dore poeta, tuis.  
haec urant pueros, haec urant scripta puellas. (43-5)

It is tempting also to discuss the question of literary development. How far is it true to say that the Propertius who so deliberately announces himself at the beginning of III is a new Propertius? Wilamowitz<sup>19</sup> remarked that there is a new objectivity in Book III, as well as a tendency to experiment—the Cleopatra poem for example, in which he attempts to combine love elegy with official panegyric, and the elegy on Marcellus; Barber and Butler comment on the significant decrease in the use of direct address.<sup>20</sup> Madame Guillemin<sup>21</sup> considers that it is in these poems in Book III that Propertius first sees himself as the Roman Callimachus, the aetiological poet of IV. Certainly there is considerable evidence of change in III, but there is still a wide gap between III and IV, which has a character all of its own;<sup>22</sup> and in general I think it is a mistake to regard III 1 and 3 as heralding this new character. The most we can say is that there is a new articulateness about method, and about his place in tradition; but he still sees himself as the poet of love.<sup>23</sup>

## II

In this section<sup>24</sup> I want to make a few general remarks about Alexandrian influence upon Latin poetry, with particular reference to Propertius. It seems to me that one can distinguish two kinds of influence. The first is theoretical, an influence of attitudes to poetry of various kinds, of views about what makes for literary excellence. The second is practical, leading to the actual imitation of literary *forms*, details of language and metaphor, of subject matter, and structure. Such imitation varies in its extent from one poet to another and from one epoch to another, just as it varies in the way in which it is combined with other influences. It becomes gradually acclimatised, leaving as a permanent legacy a care, no longer specifically Alexandrian, for the artistic use of language and structure. It is what gradually frees Latin poetry from its original awkwardness, and is of course at its best where the poet is least conscious of imitation.

The theoretical influence is found in what Catullus, Virgil, Horace and Propertius from time to time say about their own work and about the work of others. Latin poets never developed any explicit theory of their own about poetry: their theory was Alexandrian, and they continued to give expression to it even as their actual practice in writing subtly altered, so that it is to some extent an unimportant influence. Here however I am not so much concerned with the actual degree to which Propertius was influenced by Alex-

andria, as with what he says or implies about his relation to the Alexandrian tradition.

This theoretical influence is, to express it very broadly, the opposition of the aims and methods of epic writing to other kinds of poetry. There were two distinct currents in Latin poetry from the beginning of the first century B.C. onwards: the current of epic poetry, whose writers looked back to Ennius, and the current of poetry written to a greater or lesser extent in the Alexandrian tradition, the writers of which regarded epic as bombastic, clumsy, inartistic.<sup>25</sup>

To understand this opposition we must go back to Callimachus and to the obscure and complex literary war in which he was engaged with his contemporaries. The first point that we should remember about the literary ideals which we associate with Alexandria is that they were formed in a spirit of opposition and contentiousness. Literary theory became at that time inseparable from controversy, and even from purely personal spite.<sup>26</sup> The terms which it used were essentially antithetical terms. Moreover, they were weapons of abuse as well as tools of literary criticism. Hence there is a certain vagueness and ambiguity about them, a characteristic which persisted when the Romans took them over.

Callimachus disliked epic. At the close of the Hymn to Apollo<sup>27</sup> Phthonos, here the spirit of literary backbiting, whispers to the god 'I do not care for the poet whose song is not as great as the sea.' Apollo's reply is 'Great is the flow of the Assyrian river—but it carries along with it a great deal of sewage and miscellaneous rubbish.' In other words, epic is not compatible with purity of language, nor with a unified structure. Similarly, in the elegiac poem 'Against the Telchines',<sup>28</sup> which Callimachus composed in his old age partly as a literary manifesto and partly as a defence against his critics, and which perhaps formed the Prologue to the second edition of the *Aetia*, Callimachus answers those detractors who mock at his inability to write 'one extended poem ἐν ᾧ εἶσμα διηγεκέες, which should celebrate the deeds of kings and heroes in many thousands of verses'—that is, epic poetry. But, he says, the shorter poems of Mimnermus and Philetas are far superior to their longer ones; poetry should be judged by τέχνη not by the surveyor's chain; and in any case, thunder is the prerogative of Zeus, and therefore Callimachus will not write μέγα ψοφέουσιν αἰοιδήν, a loudly resounding poem. Zeus here, I suggest, represents Homer himself, whose position and privileges are unique. It is to the later imitators of Homer that Callimachus objects, to their ψόφος, their empty bombination, and to their lack of τέχνη, of meticulous art, which can only be realized in poetry which is κατὰ λεπτόν, miniature and deli-

cate.<sup>29</sup> In the first half of the prologue then, the contrast between λεπτότης and παχύτης, between delicacy and grossness in literature emerges; a contrast which is summed up in Apollo's injunction that only a sacrifice should be παχύς, *pinguis*, gross: one's muse should be λεπταλέη, *tenuis*, subtle and slender. In the second half of the poem Callimachus is concerned with a new contrast, between the common and the rare in literature: he must drive, not along the broad and crowded highway but along the narrow side road; he will write for the select few who prefer the song of the cicada to the braying of the ass. Here the combination of epic is associated with popularity and vulgarity, an association we find also in Catullus (at *populus tumido gaudeat Antimacho*).<sup>30</sup> The association is clearer in epigram 28.<sup>31</sup>

Thus in the poem against the Telchines we find a triple group of literary virtues opposed to a triple group of literary vices: the brief, the delicate, the esoteric is matched against the long-winded, the gross, and the popular. In Callimachus' view, all these vices appear at their worst in epic, poetry which celebrates kings and heroes—though they may appear in other poetry as well, for instance in the *Lyde* of Antimachus which was not epic. This grouping of virtues is found also in Latin poets. The most striking instance is in Horace *Odes* II, 16, where at the end of his poem to Grosphus he counts his own blessings:

mihi parva rura et  
spiritum Graiae tenuem Camenae  
Parca non mendax dedit et malignum  
spernere vulgus.

If there is a stylistic metaphor in *parva rura* (and an examination of similar passages suggests that there is) we have here a fleeting reference to 'smallness' in poetry, ὀλιγοστιχία. In the 'delicate melody of the Greek muse' we have the notion of λεπτότης. The contempt of the popular comes in the last line. These ideas are fused more closely in the young Virgil, who in *Catalepton* 9 says 'pingui nil mihi cum populo'. *Pinguis* corresponds to παχύς, the antonym of λεπτός, the word used by Callimachus to describe the *Lyde* of Antimachus.

There is a certain vagueness, a tendentiousness<sup>32</sup> even, about the way in which Callimachus expressed his literary ideals: they were, as I have said, used as weapons as well as critical tools. This tendentious quality emerges most clearly in the ideal of brevity. It is not simply a question of the short versus the long poem. Brevity can only be defined in a negative way, as the absence of unnecessary padding, or as the antithesis to 'grossness' and 'tumidity'. But

clearly opinions might differ over what was unnecessary padding. To put it another way, it was always possible for Alexandrian poets and for the Latin poets who followed them to define good poetry in terms of what it was not, rather than of what it was. They objected to epic, or to certain characteristics which, at least until Virgil, were regarded as inseparable from epic; but they themselves could write in a variety of styles and a variety of genres. The genre did not matter, so long as it was not epic; so long as it was not epic, they were writing in the Alexandrian tradition.

Let us look very briefly at some of the ways in which Latin poets consciously allied themselves with the literary ideals of Callimachus. We are all familiar with the conventional 'recusatio' of epic in the Augustan poets, usually taking the form of a tactful refusal: 'My dear Maecenas, there is nothing I should like better to do than to write an epic about Augustus, and so I shall one day. But just now I don't feel that my powers are adequate to do justice to so inspiring a subject.' We would be mistaken in regarding this merely as a piece of gobbledygook designed to get the poet out of an embarrassing situation. The convention goes back to Lucilius.<sup>33</sup>

There are examples of the *recusatio* in Horace's lyric poetry: in *Odes* 1, 6, for example, Horace apologises for not writing an epic on the achievements of Agrippa; 'Let Varius celebrate your deeds: I cannot do this any more than I can write an Iliad or an Odyssey. My talent is too frail for such great subjects' (*neque haec dicere . . . conamur, tenues grandia*). In the pointed juxtaposition of *tenues grandia* we have once again Callimachus' contrast of the delicate and subtle with the ambitious, gross, bombastic. Compare *Odes* IV, 15, 3-4: Horace will not spread his small sails on the Tyrrhenian sea of epic poetry. It is precisely the same contrast. Again, Propertius in III, 9 declines to sail over the 'tumidum mare': he prefers to drift down the 'exiguum flumen' of elegiac. 'Tumidum' corresponds to *παχύ*; Catullus uses it in a similar way.<sup>34</sup>

Parma mihi sint cordi monumenta  
at populus tumido gaudeat Antimacho.

The comparison of epic poetry to the sea is common. There is another example in Virgil *Georgics* II, 39-46. It was a useful metaphor to stress tactfully the dangers of writing epic—the sea is rough and perilous. But if it originated in Callimachus, the reference was probably to the *ψόφος*, of epic. Or it may have been suggested by the remark of Phthonos to Apollo, that he dislikes the poet who does not 'sing loud as the sea.'

Another *locus communis* in these poets is the admonition by

Apollo. This appears in Virgil *Eclogue* VI almost as a direct translation from Callimachus:

cum canerem reges et proelia, Cynthius aurem  
vellit et admonuit: pastorem, Tityre, pinguis  
pascere oportet oves, deductum dicere carmen.

'Carmen deductum' is Callimachus' *μοῦσαν λεπταλέην*. We find it also in Horace's 'tenui deducta poemata filo', and there is the same metaphor from spinning in Propertius III, 1: 'quo pariter carmen tenuastis in antro'—'in what cavern did you spin out together the thread of your song?' Does the spinning metaphor, at least in its reference to subtlety, also go back to Callimachus? Fragment 532 reads 'like to which the Coan writing . . .' ( *τῷ ἱκελον τὸ γράμμα τὸ Κῶνον* ) which seems to refer to Philetas of Cos; and Pfeiffer very ingeniously suggests that the other member of the comparison is Coan cloth, so celebrated for its fineness in antiquity. It was, like the style of Philetas, *tenuis* *λεπτός*. We have the same admonition by Apollo in Horace *Odes* IV, 15:

Phoebus volentem proelia me loqui  
victas et urbes, increpuit lyra  
ne parva Tyrrhenum per aequor  
vela darem.

Thus the Callimachean opposition to epic reappears in Latin poetry, with its attendant paraphernalia of technical literary terms, stylistic metaphors, and *loci communes*. How far were they merely conventional, and how far do they represent a genuinely held literary point of view? It is difficult to say, and a proper answer to the question would require a knowledge of the epic poetry of the time greater than we possess. My own view is that the whole tradition of Latin poetry, so closely connected from the very beginning with the destiny of Rome herself, caused the Augustan poets to be quite seriously preoccupied with the problem of epic. Rome required an epic as few states have done since; and yet the poets saw clearly enough that it was not along these lines that poetry could at that time develop. One could not go back to Ennius. It required a poet of the calibre of Virgil, and one who was, like him, nurtured in the tradition of Alexandrian poetry, to solve the problem. Alexandrian literary warfare was transferred to Rome; the Latin poets availed themselves of its terms and its weapons, but the conditions were altered. While Latin poetry gradually broke away from direct imitation of the Alexandrian masters and while it developed its own character in conformity with conditions not present in third century Alexandria, the general point of view, the general opposition to

epic, still remained. Poets still felt themselves in the Alexandrian tradition, although the poetry which they wrote was very dissimilar to the poetry written at Alexandria—at least in the case of the elegists. The elegiac poets were helped in this attitude by the fact that a considerable amount of epic was being written to which they were opposed. No doubt much of it was in fact tumid. Therefore, in opposing it they could feel themselves as heirs to Callimachus and Philetas even though they were not writing *aetia* or idylls or epyllia, but personal love elegy. Or perhaps precisely because they were writing love elegy. For the strain of personal love poetry in Latin literature had grown directly out of the Alexandrian tradition—starting from Laevius and from the imitators of Hellenistic epigram, Catulus and his friends, through the *neoterici* and Catullus, to Gallus, who, whatever the precise nature of his relation to Euphorion, was certainly more *directly* influenced by Alexandria than Propertius.

This tradition, this partial identification of personal love poetry with Alexandrian poetry, appears very clearly in Propertius II, 34. There he lists as his predecessors Virgil in his *Eclogues*, Varro of Atax, Catulus, Calvus and Gallus—all of them strongly influenced by the Alexandrian tradition. He might have added Laevius and Tidas. When the controversy over epic became sharpened, as it did in Augustan Rome, literary history to some extent repeated itself. But this time the Alexandrian, anti-epic tradition was narrowed down to love poetry. It was easy for Propertius to see himself as the champion of this tradition.

But Horace, who also wrote love poetry, and who equally repudiated epic, never thought of himself as a Roman Callimachus. Why then did Propertius? Partly because Propertius wrote exclusively in elegy, a form in which Callimachus was traditionally regarded as the grand master. Partly because Horace, perhaps reacting against the neo-Alexandrianism of Propertius and his circle,<sup>35</sup> turned by preference to 'exemplaria Graeca' of an earlier era—to Archilochus, Alcaeus, Anacreon. And partly, of course, because of Propertius' personality—he was an irregular and highly conceited genius who liked to think of himself, with some justification, as the leader of a school.

There is however another factor which is highly relevant to any examination of the relation of Propertius to the Alexandrians, because it emphasized the opposition to epic writing in a way unknown in Alexandria. This is the peculiar idea the elegists seem to have had, that the rejection of epic was somehow connected with the refusal to adopt an official career and with the refusal to live as good Romans should under the Augustan dictatorship.

## III

When empires fall, when social and political systems lose their stability, whenever a society is in a state, not necessarily of decline, but of flux, we can expect to find an intense interest in the individual as such, his problems and his destiny. This is a well-known characteristic of the Hellenistic age, and one of the reasons why we to-day find it so fascinating a period in social history. It is again characteristic of the first century B.C. in Rome: one finds this particular concern with the individual in Lucretius, Catullus, even in Caesar.

Obviously an increased interest in the individual, a tendency to contrast the individual and his society, has an effect on literature—and not merely on the substance of literature but also on its form. In such epochs an experimental attitude tends to emerge. Certainly it is easier for the poet to go his own way: the view of the poet as the servant of a society disappears, and he becomes a freelance, the servant of nothing but his own art. Indeed, individualism is forced upon him: he can no longer express the ethos of the society in which he lives, since that ethos is no longer a unity, but highly complex and varied.

It was in this context that the Alexandrian strain in Latin literature developed. The *neoterici* were in some ways more Alexandrian than Roman, in their subjects, their forms and style, their lack of interest, as poets, in anything except their art. This devotion to art is apparent in Catullus. Unlike Propertius he is entirely unself-conscious about it, and no one rebuked him for writing love poetry, or required him to produce an official panegyric.

In this atmosphere of poetry for poetry's sake, of devotion to Alexandrian ideals, and of the increasing tendency, partly due to Catullus himself, to identify the Alexandrian tradition with love poetry, Latin love elegy had its birth.

Things were much more difficult for Tibullus and Propertius and their contemporaries than they were for Catullus and his circle.<sup>36</sup> However spurious the community feeling which Augustus's ministry of propaganda attempted to impose upon so fluid and varied and demoralized a society, and however dubious its political framework, they were undeniably there; and by their mere existence rather than by any official policy of censorship, they tended to cramp the liberty of the individual writer. Consider the position of a Propertius or a Tibullus. They were imbued by their upbringing with the traditions of Republican Rome, and conscious of the official attempt to restore such traditions. Yet the poetry to which they were inclined by their poetic education and their social milieu was in the starkest opposi-

tion to official policy. To the ideal of the good citizen and soldier, they opposed their own ideal, the *amator*. Loyalty to their mistress interested them more than loyalty to the Princeps. Above all—for they were poets—they opposed the ideal of a life devoted to artistic pursuits to the ideal of a life devoted to the service of the state. It was the presence of this opposition which led them to formulate and proclaim their own programme of life.<sup>37</sup> There is a tendency now to regard the work of the elegists in this light, as a manifesto of their own concepts, with examples of behaviour which are typical rather than strictly autobiographical: the lover locked out, the lover renouncing his love, the beloved on the bed of fever, and so on.

There are two elegies in Book I in which Propertius seems to be deliberately setting out his attitude in poetry and in life. They are written in a convention, and with a consciously programmatic aim—a fact which of course does not exclude great poetry. Propertius I, 6 is addressed to the poet's friend Tullus, who is going to Asia Minor in some official capacity. Propertius would like to go with him, but he is engaged in a love affair at the moment, and can't get away; Tullus on the other hand is a serious minded young man who has never allowed himself the leisure for such trifling. The elegy opens out into the magnificently plangent lines—

me sine, quem semper voluit fortuna iacere  
hanc animam extrema reddere nequitia.  
multi longinquo periere in amore libenter,  
in quorum numero me quoque terra tegat.

He goes on:

non ego sum laudi, non natus idoneus armis:  
hanc me militiam fata subire volunt.

The theme of the elegy, its conventional frame, is the contrast of the lover with the man of action; and by means of the convention Propertius has been able to convey a deeply personal and passionate statement. The word 'nequitia' sums up the kind of life which Propertius is opposing to the life of an up and coming young man of Augustan Rome. The word had a precise meaning for the elegists. It signifies their disposition to count fame and fortune well lost for love, or, in less happy circumstances, the mood of desperate abandonment to everything which comes upon the rejected lover. Propertius so uses it here and in II, 24, 6: if Cynthia were kind, I should not be called the 'caput nequitiae'. Ovid boasts of being the poet of his own 'nequitia' in *Amores* II, 1, 2.

It is a paradoxical use: half rueful and half defiant, it expresses their behaviour as a Roman of the old school might regard it. It

sums up well their awareness of the official or supposedly official attitude.<sup>38</sup> Tibullus I, 1, 57-8 uses the word 'inertia' with the same mood: rather than go overseas on military service, Tibullus would prefer to stay with Delia and be called 'segnis inersque.' Similarly, Propertius vows that he will never cross the sea to be drowned like Paetus, but 'ante fores dominae condar oportet iners' (III, 7, 71-2). This time the lover is contrasted not with the soldier but with the merchant. Merchant and soldier are connected by the idea, almost a convention in the elegists, that greed for money is the cause of wars.<sup>39</sup> In I, 6, Propertius says that *his* 'militia' is his affair with Cynthia: the general theme, the contrast between two kinds of life, is the same, but the metaphor introduces us to a conceit which is present in Tibullus as well<sup>40</sup> and—*militat omnis amans*—is fully and wittily developed by Ovid to its final paradox:

qui nolet fieri desidiosus-amet.<sup>41</sup>

But while in Propertius the contrast between two lives is meant, or at least is presented, seriously, and may even reflect a real conflict in the poet's mind, Ovid characteristically resolves the conflict into wit. As E. Reitzenstein pointed out, the themes and attitudes of elegiac poetry were already established by Ovid's time; they were a convention which he took up and dealt with mockingly according to the dictates of his genius.<sup>42</sup>

Side by side with the contrast of the lover and the man of action, there is a contrast between the poet of love and the poet of war, the epic poet. In I, 7, composed as a companion piece to the poem to Tullus, Propertius addresses his friend the epic poet Ponticus. Ponticus is writing a *Thebaid*, but Propertius is in love and can only write love poetry. But Ponticus himself may fall in love some day, and what use will his *Thebaid* be then? Propertius' poetry on the other hand will win him both present success and after fame. While I, 6 was a simple contrast of lover and man of action, I, 7 is slightly more complex: Propertius contrasts himself with Ponticus in his life as well as in his art. The elegiac poets were least likely of all poets to dissociate poetry and life, because the existence which they held up as an ideal was an existence devoted quite as much to art as to love. So Propertius brings the two together in lines 9-10 of the present elegy:

hic mihi conteritur vitae modus, haec mea fama est,  
hinc cupio nomen carminis ire mei

To love, and to write love poetry, are one and the same, a 'vitae modus'; and just as *amor* is associated with *nequitia*, *inertia*, or the rejection of a public career in favour of one which is private and

considerably more entertaining, so is *amor* associated with the rejection of epic in favour of love elegy.

We meet once again the contrast between two kinds of poetry, but the contrast is now deepened and altered. It is deepened, because it becomes in a sense more serious. The question is no longer merely a question of what kind of poetry to write, but of what kind of social values to adopt. At least it is presented as such. And the contrast is altered, because the poetry recommended is narrowed down to one genre, love elegy.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> F. Jacoby, 'Zur Entstehung der Römischen Elegie' *RhM* 1905.

<sup>2</sup> As far as Callimachus is concerned, E. Cahen (*Callimaque* 1948, p.19) points out that it is a priori unlikely that he would have written personal love elegy: 'l'idée même de longue élégie amoureuse est exactement contradictoire à la manière volontairement brève et ramassée de Callimaque dans l'expression du sentiment.'—a characteristically penetrating judgement, although of course it is principally in the *epigrams* that we find 'expression du sentiment'. cf. also Wilamowitz, *Hellenistische Dichtung* 1920, Vol. I, 235, '... noch war irgend einer der griechischen Poeten imstande, so über seine inneren Gefühle zu reflektieren oder zu reden, wie es die Römer tun, und wäre er es gewesen, so wurde er es nicht gewollt haben.' Similarly A. Guillemin (*REL* 1939, 97) stresses this peculiarity of Latin literature (Lucretius, Cicero's letters etc.) in contrast to Greek. Similarly, A. Rostagni 'L'Influenza Greca sulle origini dell' elegia erotica Latina' in *L'Influence Grecque sur la poésie latine de Catulle à Ovide* (Fondation Hardt 1956) pp.72-75; cf. J. Bayet's remarks, *ibid* pp.83-4. Rostagni points out (p.74) that even Hellenistic epigram was 'personal' only in a very restricted sense. In his paper, the most recent statement of the problem, Rostagni is in general agreement with Jacoby and Wilamowitz, although he differs sharply from Jacoby on the work of Gallus, Tibullus, if anyone, was the originator here (p.81).

<sup>3</sup> H. E. Butler and E. A. Barber, *The Elegies of Propertius*, 1933. A. A. Day, *The Origins of Latin Love Elegy*, 1938, p.32.

<sup>4</sup> e.g. Jacoby, *ibid* p.60: 'von vornherein verdient da bemerkt zu werden, dass sich alle diese Stellen in dem Gegensatz zwischen dem grossen Epos und der Kleindichtung der Elegie bewegen.'

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p.56.

<sup>6</sup> The story of Acontius and Cydippe was not necessarily the only instance of erotic motif in the *Aetia*. Among others, the Argonaut legends, and the story of Leimone in Book IV would offer similar opportunities. But even if Callimachus did avail himself of these, a glance at the fragments and at the *Diegeseis* will show how small a part the elaboration of such incidents must have played in the whole work. Moreover, one gathers from the remaining portion that the Acontius episode was treated rather as a good story than specifically for any love interest. As for the mythology, indirect borrowing through Parthenius seems a more likely source.

<sup>7</sup> V. Pöschl in *L'Influence Grecque sur la poésie latine de Catulle à Ovide* (Fondation Hardt 1956) p. 89 remarks that the tendency to claim a Greek predecessor was general in Latin poetry, even where the predecessor was not altogether appropriate. But obviously Horace had some reason to believe that he really was following in the footsteps of Alcaeus, Archilochus, Pindar even, and surely we must credit Prop. with a similar belief. There seems some inaccuracy in Pöschl's remark 'Ebenso beruft sich Properz auf Philitas und Kallimachos, weil sie tatsächlich Liebeselegien gedichtet haben, wenn auch Liebeselegien anderer Art.' We do not know whether Philetas wrote love elegy of any kind.

<sup>8</sup> So, P. Maas, 'Untersuchungen zu Properz und Seinen Griechischen Vorbildern', *Hermes* 1896, 402-4.

<sup>9</sup> The use of 'sacra' in Virgil *Georg.* II 476 is a sufficient parallel. There is no suggestion of a special meaning there.

<sup>10</sup> Fr. I Pfeiffer, 25-8.

<sup>11</sup> Not only, as it seems to me, does P. associate C. and Ph. with love *elegy*, but also with love poetry in general, whether elegiac or not. So at least II, 34, suggests: P. after recommending Lynceus to imitate Ph. and C. goes on—certainly after a longish interval—to mention Virgil, Varro Atacinus, Catullus, Calvus as well as Gallus as precedents in the writing of love poetry.

<sup>12</sup> For *mollis* cf. e.g. *mollem versum* I, 7, 19; *ad mollis membra resolve choras* II, 34, 40. For the idea of *parvus, exiguo flumine* III, 9, 36; *angusto torno* II, 39, 43; perhaps also the *parvi Amores* of III, 1; the notion is implied by contrast in *vastum aequor* III, 9, 3. cf. also Hor. *Odes* IV, 15, 3-4. Perhaps the *parva rura* of Hor. *Odes* II, 16, 37 has a similar reference.

<sup>13</sup> cf. Schol. Flor. ad Fr. 2 Pfeiff. Vol. I p.11; and the epigram in the Anthology, VII, 42.

<sup>14</sup> *Hellenistische Dichtung* II, p.94 ff.

<sup>15</sup> See Fr. 696 Pfeiff.

<sup>16</sup> Fr. I 21-4.

<sup>17</sup> It is instructive to compare the elegy with Horace *Odes* III, 14. There too the poet begins with formal panegyric, giving it at line 13 an ingenious personal twist—

*Hic dies vere mihi festus atras / eximet curas—*

and passing over, exactly as Propertius does, to a personal and erotic theme,—*dic et argutae properet Neaerae*. There is a somewhat similar transition in Propertius IV, 6.

<sup>18</sup> Similarly Tibullus I, 10, although here the third member of the equation peace-amor-love elegy is lacking. But its position in the book (cf. W. Port, 'Die Anordnung in Gedichtbüchern,' *Philologus* 1926, p.441) gives it a certain relevance to Tibullus' literary aims. Tibullus is never so explicit about himself as artist as P. so characteristically is.

<sup>19</sup> *op. cit.* I 235-6.

<sup>20</sup> Introduction xiiff. (following W. Abel.)

<sup>21</sup> A. Guillemin, *Properce, de Cynthie aux Poèmes Romains*. REL. 1950.

<sup>22</sup> On the new interest in IV in the objective painting of feminine psychology—Arethusa, Cynthia, Cornelia—see E. Reitzenstein 'Wirklichkeitsbild und Gefühlsentwicklung bei Properz', *Philologus*, Suppl. XXIX, 1931.

<sup>23</sup> The references to C. and Ph. in Ovid are not part of my subject; they are on the whole similar and are to be explained in a similar way. While it is true that many of the references to C. in Propertius and in Ovid might be connected with the Acontius episode (explicitly in Ovid *Rem.* 382: *Cydispe non est oris, Homere, tui*) we might still ask why one brief erotic episode in the work of a poet not normally concerned with erotic subjects, should assume such importance in the eyes of the Roman elegists. Clearly the significance of the episode was that it was composed by Callimachus—not the other way round.

<sup>24</sup> In this section I am chiefly indebted to M. Puelma Piwonka '*Lucilius und Kallimachos*' (1949), Ch.II, where most of the relevant passages from Callimachus and from Latin poetry are carefully set out and fully discussed. I have also found the notes in Pfeiffer's great edition of Callimachus (1949) particularly useful for the citation of parallel passages, both Greek and Latin.

The article by E. Reitzenstein, '*zur Stiltheorie des Kallimachos*' in '*Festschrift R. Reitzenstein*' (1931) is not available in Australia—a particularly regrettable omission.

<sup>25</sup> Naturally such a dichotomy must be qualified. Ennius himself was probably influenced by Callimachus; while Varro of Atax wrote a *Bellum Sequanicum* as well as *erotopaegnia* and Alexandrian epic.

<sup>26</sup> Is perhaps Callimachus' attitude to the *Lyde* of Antimachus an example? Learned, catalogic, erotic, modelled on Hesiod rather than on Homer, one would have expected it to win Callimachus' approval. But Asclepiades and Poseidippus wrote epigrams commending it (A.P.ix, 63; xii, 158)—and they were Callimachus' literary enemies (Sch. Fl. on Call. Fr. I).

<sup>27</sup> Hymn II 105-112.

<sup>28</sup> Pfeiffer Fr. I.

<sup>29</sup> It was not of course length as such to which Call. objected. The *Aetia* was probably longer than the *Argonautica* of Apollonius; while the point of the *Hecale*, written according to one scholiast as a demonstration that he too could write a 'great poem' lay not so much in its relative shortness as in the subtlety of its arrangement and the lack of pomposity in its manner.

<sup>30</sup> XCVB.

<sup>31</sup> For the use of *κυκλικός* in Alexandrian criticism, see M. Puelma Piwonka, *ibid.*, p.120, N. 1.

<sup>32</sup> There is an example of such tendentiousness in the contrast which Call. seems to have made between Hesiod and Homer. The *λεπταῖρ ἦσιες* of Aratos are Hesiodic (Call. Ep.27); the *Aetia* itself is set in a Hesiodic frame (Fr. 2 and Sch., A.P. vii 42), even if Call. does not actually say that he followed the path of Hesiod (Arnim conjectured *εἴπε' ἄταρπον* in line 4 of Fr. 112, a reading which is adopted by Cahen). The point about Hesiod was not that he was particularly 'subtle', but that he was not Homer. (See Piwonka, S.139 ff.) Wilamowitz on the other hand sees a similarity between the *Aetia* and Hesiod, mainly in the personal introduction of the poet (*ibid.*, I, 186).

<sup>33</sup> For the *Recusatio* in Lucilius, and its equivalent passages in Horace's *Satires* and *Epistles*, see Piwonka *ibid.*, Chap. II, 2, particularly pp. 151 ff. His reconstruction and interpretation of the Lucilius fragments seem to me very probable.

<sup>34</sup> XCVB. Ellis prints these lines together with the preceding poem, in which case Antimachus is 'Volusius' (Tanusius Geminus) and we have an instance of Callimachean categories being actually applied in Roman literary criticism. Mynors, however, *Catulli Carmina*, 1958, separates XCVA and B.

<sup>35</sup> See the suggestion on Horace *Odes* III, 30, 2 in K. F. Quinn, 'Two Crises in Horace's Poetical Career,' AUMLA, Oct. 1956, pp.40-1.

<sup>36</sup> cf. E. Reitzenstein, 'Das neue Kunstwollen in den Amores Ovids', RHM. 1935, p.65: 'Catull steht der unpolitischen, individualistischen Haltung des alexandrinischen Künstlers weit näher als die römischen Elegiker, zu deren Zeit das Gemeinschaftsbewusstsein durch das Werk des Augustus eine starke Wiederbelebung erfährt.'

<sup>37</sup> E. Burck, 'Römische Wesenszüge der augusteischen Liebeselegie.' *Hermes*, 1952, p.199. The aim of the elegists was 'die Liebe und die Kunst als die zentralen Gewalten in die Mitte einer neuen Lebensform zu rücken und im Werben und Leiden um die Geliebte den Sinn dieser neuen Existenzform zu erblicken'. Burck examines the way in which the elegists employ traditional religious and juristic concepts in their elegy. For the new view of love elegy in general, see E. Reitzenstein, *Philologus*, Suppl. XXIX, 1931 (op. cit.) 49 ff. especially the remark: 'Man muss es immer wieder betonen: jedes Gedicht will als Kunstwerk zunächst einmal aus sich selbst heraus verstanden werden.'

<sup>38</sup> E. Reitzenstein, RHM 1935 (op. cit.) p.64, says 'Sich aus dem Gemeinschaftsbewusstsein loszulösen, ganz auf das eigene Ich zurückzuziehen, ist nequitia.'

<sup>39</sup> The connection of soldier and merchant is implied e.g. in Prop. III, 5, 1-6, 11-14; Tib. I, 1, 1-4. That avarice is the cause of war is of course not an idea confined to the elegists.

<sup>40</sup> Tib. I, 1, 75.

<sup>41</sup> *Amores*, I, 9, 46.

<sup>42</sup> op. cit. p.66.

# ELIZABETH BOWEN—PRE-ASSUMPTIONS OR MORAL ANGLE?

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ALTHOUGH Elizabeth Bowen has lived mainly in England, she has always been in close touch with her native Ireland, particularly with her family home—Bowen's Court, Kilderrery, County Cork—which she inherited in 1931. Bowen's Court has haunted her imagination throughout her career as a novelist, and it is the object of this essay to show that the complex of habits, tastes and codes of behaviour, of which it is a symbol, has, to some extent at least, shaped her work.

Miss Bowen is undoubtedly one of the most thoughtful and conscious of contemporary novelists. Apart from the novels themselves, the chief evidence of her intense interest in the function and craft of fiction is her essay, 'Notes on Writing a Novel'. (*Collected Impressions*, pp.249-263). In one of the most interesting and important sections of this essay Miss Bowen discusses *Moral Angle*. She remarks, *inter alia*:

'This too often means, pre-assumptions—social, political, sexual, national, aesthetic, and so on. These may all exist, sunk at different levels, in the same novelist. Their existence cannot fail to be palpable; and their nature determines, more than anything else, the sympatheticness or antipatheticness of a given novel to a given circle of readers. Pre-assumptions are bad. They limit the novel to a given circle of readers . . . Outside the given circle, a novel's pre-assumptions must invalidate it for all other readers . . . Great novelists write without pre-assumption. They write from outside their own nationality, class or sex.' (p.258)

This last sentence, taken alone, seems to suggest that it should be impossible to discover a great novelist's sex or social background from his work. If this is the meaning intended, then Elizabeth Bowen is certainly not a great novelist. Her background—literate, cultivated, well-to-do—has inevitably determined the range and scope of her work, as similar backgrounds defined the range and scope of the three novelists with whom she is the most often compared—Jane Austen, Virginia Woolf, and Ivy Compton-Burnett. Like these writers, Miss Bowen has usually recognized her own limitations, and has generally remained within the confines of the world she knows most intimately—the upper middle class world, peopled mainly by men and women with private incomes, inherited

privileges and sensitive tastes. Just as her social origins are clearly indicated by the social area which she chooses to depict, so also is her sex evident from the characters within that social area—women, young or recently young—on whom she focusses her own and the reader's attention, and whose eyes and minds she uses, for the most part, as her point of view.

Miss Bowen, however, is not suggesting that even the great novelist should attempt to write outside his natural range of knowledge, experience and understanding. But she is insisting that, while he may write chiefly about his own class and sex, the judgments and values implied by his work must not be dictated by his nationality, class or sex.

Does Miss Bowen's work pass this test? Miss Elizabeth Hardwick, perhaps Miss Bowen's severest critic, would certainly deny it. Translated into Miss Bowen's own terms, the main purpose of Miss Hardwick's essay is to demonstrate that Miss Bowen's novels have not a 'moral angle', but that they are based on a number of 'social, political, sexual, national and aesthetic pre-assumptions' which Miss Hardwick finds 'antipathetic'. One of the main pre-assumptions that Miss Hardwick detects is sexual. She sees, beneath 'the urbane and complex surface' of Miss Bowen's work, 'a romantic feminist who serves up a perennial dish . . . the tragedy of the Fine Girl and the Impossible Man,' and she considers that this theme of 'the innocent woman's maltreatment by reprobate, mysterious man, by the weak or unfaithful lover'<sup>1</sup> is mainly responsible for Miss Bowen's popularity.

Is this really the constant theme of Miss Bowen's fiction? Are her novels based on the fatally damaging pre-assumption that men are snakes and women doves? Is her work an extended, modernised, sophisticated version of 'The Legende of Good Women', an attempt less half-hearted, because less conscious and deliberate, than Chaucer's, to create a dichotomy of faithful, loyal, loving, martyred women and brutal, faithless, treacherous, cold-hearted men?

It is true that one important element in Miss Bowen's novels is, almost invariably, the agonized and frustrated pursuit of romantic love. But it must be stressed that the frustration and anguish are not confined to Miss Bowen's heroines, and that they are only one manifestation of her general theme, which has often been rather crudely stated as the attraction between guilt and innocence, but would be more accurately defined as the painful adjustment of unformed personality to the realities of society. Particularly in the earlier novels, there is nothing so simple as the equations: Woman = Innocence; Man = Guilt. For example, in the first novel, *The Hotel* (1928), the clergyman James Milton is refused, then accepted,

then jilted, through no obvious fault of his own, by the book's heroine Sydney Warren; but they are both, directly or indirectly, the victims of Mrs Kerr, who attracts Sydney into an imagined intimacy, only to close the door in her face, with the insinuation that she is unbalanced and immoderate in her demands. The point of the novel seems to be that a capacity for emotion is a liability which has to be jettisoned if one is to survive. But the ineffectual James Milton is not the agent of this knowledge.

Similarly in the later novel, *The House in Paris* (1936), Max Ebhart suffers as much as Karen Michaelis through their differences in race, outlook and background, and it is Max who is driven to suicide by the malignant Mme Fisher. Again in *The Death of the Heart* (1938), even if we insist on regarding Portia Quayne simply as *Innocence Betrayed* (which is a quite inadequate view), then her chief betrayer is not the *enfant terrible*, Eddie, but Anna Quayne, the wife of her step-brother. It is Anna who, by discovering, reading and broadcasting Portia's diary, teaches her that if life leads anywhere, it is to betrayal.

If, then, Miss Bowen's heroines, one after another, learn that the full, intense, spontaneous, impulsive life for which they yearn is impossible, in the society in which they have to live, it is nothing as simple as the ruthlessness and wickedness of men which teaches them.

Nevertheless it must be admitted that the men in Miss Bowen's novels received increasingly harsh treatment. James Milton; Gerald Lesworth (in *The Last September* (1929)), and Edward Tilney and Rodney Meggatt (in *Friends and Relations* (1931)) are presented far more sympathetically than Mark Linkwater (in *To the North* (1932)), Max Ebhart, Eddie, and Robert Kelway (in *The Heat of the Day* (1949)). In the group of novels, beginning with *To the North* and ending with *The Heat of the Day*, there are, however, other masculine characters, of almost equal prominence, of whom Miss Bowen seems to approve, with some qualifications. They include Julian Tower in *To the North*, Ray Forrestier in *The House in Paris*, St Quentin in *The Death of the Heart*, and Roderick in *The Heat of the Day*. So if the others are unsympathetically presented, this cannot be ascribed to mere indiscriminating misanthropy on Miss Bowen's part. If there is evidence of any pre-assumption in their portrayal, it is a social rather than a sexual pre-assumption.

As a preliminary to this question of Miss Bowen's social pre-assumptions, it would be well to consider briefly some of the differences between the fictional world of Elizabeth Bowen and that of Jane Austen, who, according to Jocelyn Brooke, is 'the distinguished

novelist of the past with whom Miss Bowen has most in common'.<sup>2</sup> The most important difference is that in the relatively stable society of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, with its nearly watertight class system, Jane Austen could concentrate her attention exclusively on one class—the substantial country gentry—with the underlying assumption that the behaviour of this class was important, since it still held a position of dominance in contemporary society. But when Miss Bowen came to write about this same upper middle class 130 years later, its position had changed greatly. One can hardly imagine a Jane Austen character asking, as does Miss Pym in *The Hotel*: 'If you come to think of it, what is the good of us? . . . I mean us all, our class.' Miss Pym is a minor character, and she is laughed into confused silence, but her bewilderment indicates Miss Bowen's early awareness that the comfortable, leisured class she chooses to present is no longer functional, but mainly parasitic, that it is no longer enclosed, relatively homogeneous and sure of itself, but diminishing, disintegrating, dying and being submerged by the bourgeoisie. Several of Miss Bowen's other early characters are conscious of their class's plight; some of them accept its eclipse and extinction as inevitable and even desirable. For example, Karen Michaelis, in *The House in Paris*, remarks (in about 1925):

'Things one can do have no value. I don't mind feeling small myself, but I dread finding the world is . . . I wish the Revolution would come soon; . . . I sometimes think it is people like us, Aunt Violet, people of consequence, who are unfortunate: we have nothing ahead. I feel it's time something happened.'

Thomas Quayne's attitude a dozen years later reflects the further slump in morale of his class.

'We none of us seem to feel very well and I don't think we want each other to know it. I suppose there is nothing so disintegrating as competitiveness and funk, and that's what we all feel. The ironical thing is that everyone else gets their knives into us bourgeoisie on the assumption we're having a good time. They seem to have no idea that we don't much care for ourselves. We weren't nearly so much hated when we gave them more to hate. But it took guts even to be the fools our fathers were . . . Oh, we've got to live, but I doubt if we see the necessity. The most we can hope is to go on getting away with it till the others get it away from us.' (*The Death of the Heart*).

There is, then, a great difference between the superficially similar worlds of Jane Austen and Elizabeth Bowen. Jane Austen portrayed

a class in the heyday of its prosperity and prestige. Elizabeth Bowen has portrayed the same class in its nadir of futility, purposelessness and moral collapse. L. P. Hartley has commented: 'The life she portrays is as full of rents and fissures as a bombed-out building and smells of decay, but she portrays it unflinchingly.'<sup>3</sup> The first part of the comment is obviously true, but it seems inaccurate to describe Miss Bowen's portrayal as 'unflinching'. In fact it seems to be a central paradox in Miss Bowen's work that, while recognizing that the particular class she chooses to depict is moribund, that its horizons have narrowed round it like a prison, that it is futile, discontented, without faith or hope, facing death by suffocation, she yet seems to regard it as the somewhat cracked repository of qualities she cherishes most highly—what Chaucer called 'gentillesse' and Jane Austen 'true elegance of mind'. It is dangerous to equate Miss Bowen's views with those of any of her characters, but there may be a clue to Miss Bowen's attitude towards society in her comment on Karen Michaelis: 'She saw this inherited world enough from the outside to see that it might not last, but, perhaps for that reason, obstinately stood by it.' (*The House in Paris*).

The Irish critic-novelist Benedict Kiely has asserted that

'Elizabeth Bowen's development as a writer begins with the Roman solidity of a Big House with bald walls outstaring the disturbing light of a local mysticism, a house with no haunted rooms and with strong foundations cut by the sword, with the wish to be part of a pattern and with a fear of intransitive loneliness.'<sup>4</sup>

It could be argued not that her development begins at this point, but that she has *not* developed from this point. For although Miss Bowen does not anywhere in her novels explicitly reveal her social views, though her work is free from the political obsessions which have blurred the visions of many of her contemporaries, there is a good deal of evidence in her novels to suggest that Bowen's Court is not merely her part-time temporal home, but that what, at its best, it stood for is her full-time spiritual home.

It is worth mentioning that Yeats's background was similar to Miss Bowen's and that his fine poem 'Prayer for My Daughter' provides a remarkably accurate summary of Miss Bowen's social beliefs (or intuitions). Not only do her comments on pre-assumptions suggest that she would accept as applicable to the novelist the lines:

'An intellectual hatred is the worst,  
So let her think opinions are accursed.'

but her novels everywhere suggest that Yeats's wishes for his daughter are also her wishes for her heroines:

'O may she live like some green laurel  
Rooted in one dear perpetual place.'

A reflection of one heroine, Emmeline Summers, is almost a gloss on these lines.

'She longed suddenly to be fixed, to enjoy an apparent stillness, to watch even an hour complete round one object its little changes of light, to see out the little and greater cycles of day and season in one place, beloved, familiar, to watch shadows move round one garden, to know the same trees in spring and autumn and in their winter forms.' (*To the North*)

'And may her bridegroom bring her to a house  
Where all's accustomed, ceremonious;  
For arrogance and hatred are the wares  
Peddled in the thoroughfares.  
How but in custom and in ceremony  
Are innocence and beauty born?'

Stephen Spender's remark on this poem, that Yeats 'rests always on certain qualities, rather than ideas, such as breeding and courtesy,'<sup>5</sup> seems at least equally applicable to Miss Bowen. In her essay 'The Big House' she has written:

'What is fine about the social idea is that it means the subjugation of the personal to the impersonal. In the interests of good manners and good behaviour people learned to subdue their own feelings. The result was an easy and unsuspecting intercourse, to which everyone brought the best that they had—wit, knowledge, sympathy or personal beauty". And "Well, why not *be* polite—are not humane manners the crown of being human at all? Politeness is not constriction; it is a grace: it is really no worse than exercise of the imagination on other people's behalf: and are we to cut grace quite out of life?' (*Collected Impressions*, pp.199-200).

'Good behaviour, politeness, sympathy, humane manners': these are desirable attributes, but they seem, in Miss Bowen's novels, to be reserved almost entirely to the gentry and the upper middle class, to those with some lingering vestigial connection with the 'big houses', those who belong to 'county' families (now somewhat fallen), or at least to those who know who they are and whence they came and who feel their ties with the past—the landowning past

with all its pride and privileges (and obligations). It would be most unjust to suggest that all of Miss Bowen's characters from the upper middle class and the gentry show these qualities. But the important point is that the heroines belong to this sub-class and have at least some of these qualities; much of their suffering, as already suggested, is caused by the fact that they do not find them in the society in which they have to live. In Desmond Hawkins's brilliant phrase, 'they are the potential elements of an aristocracy that no longer exists'.<sup>6</sup>

But, whereas in the earlier novels the principal males also belonged to this same sub-class, it is noticeable that in all the novels after *Friends and Relations*, the men with whom the heroines fall in love are more or less 'outsiders': they have not the same nostalgic loyalties themselves, and they do not understand them in the heroines. There is, in other words, an increased tendency in the later novels for Miss Bowen to place her heroines and their lovers in opposition to one another, as representatives of different classes and ways of life (the rooted and the rootless; the aristocrat and the upstart) and of different standards and values (idealism and materialism; passion and calculation). And although Miss Bowen does conscientiously try to be fair to both, her instinctive preference for the aristocratic code represented by her heroines and her distaste for their lovers' rootlessness show through.

So, in *To the North*, Miss Bowen strives to maintain the same blend of sympathy and detachment in her portrayal of Emmeline and Markie, for theirs, she recognizes, is a tragedy of disparity, of mutual incomprehension. But there is no doubt which of the two has her deeper sympathy. Miss Bowen does recognize that Emmeline 'may have been on some plane or another a kind of idiot'; but such adjectives as 'gentle', 'mild', 'innocent', 'delicate' and their derivatives are used so often, and such qualities as 'clear reticence', 'profound shyness' and 'docility' so frequently attributed to her, that the reader comes to think of her as a vulnerable, defenceless, faun-like creature, and inevitably to think of her lover as a ruthless, conscienceless boor. Miss Bowen, it is true, does give us sufficient insight into Markie's consciousness for us to understand why he finds it impossible to marry Emmeline, and to see that he too suffers, that he is Emmeline's victim as well as she his. But these glimpses are few. Far more dominant is the impression of bumpiousness, cynicism, arrogance, rudeness, brutality: these qualities are abundantly and explicitly displayed. So there seems to be not only disparity between Emmeline and Markie, but a disparity between the sympathy Miss Bowen reveals for her two principals. It is natural, of course, for a woman writer more fully to understand

and sympathise with her feminine characters. But this is not the real reason for the denigration of Markie. The main reason is the strongest of Miss Bowen's social pre-assumptions. Rather than define this myself, I quote the comment of one of Miss Bowen's warmest admirers, Jocelyn Brooke: 'The social group which, for her, represents the intractable and dangerous element in society is . . . the pretentious, Philistine middle-class.'

*To the North* is not by any means an obvious parable of conflict between the 'gentry' and the bourgeoisie. There is very little indication of Emmeline's background. In one sentence that Jane Austen might have written, Miss Bowen tells us: "Henry and Emmeline Summers had been orphans since childhood, with no relatives nearer, few friends more trusted than Sir Robert Waters, their father's cousin." Nor are we told who Sir Robert is, or whence he came, but Cecilia, in a letter to Julian Tower, writes of this gentle, ineffectual, self-effacing optimist: 'When old men like Sir Robert are dead, our civilisation will go—don't you think?' Markie Linkwater's background is not specifically described either. He seems at first to belong to the same class as Emmeline; he is an Old Harrovian, a young barrister swiftly rising to the top of his profession, obviously accustomed to affluence and luxurious living. But he is essentially a city-dweller, hating the country, contemptuous of 'such placid pools in the life-stream'. (His contempt saddens Emmeline). His brother-in-law Mr Dolman is 'something to do with gas: he directs companies'. Markie has a flat in his sister's (or her husband's) house, 'a large, rather disagreeably imposing house whose lease had been purchased almost for nothing during the war'. Miss Bowen does not, of course, openly suggest any causal relation between Emmeline's connections with the gentry and her innocence and candour, or between Markie's connections with trade and business and his predatory ruthlessness; but implied relationship there certainly is.

In *The House in Paris* the pre-assumptions are a little more evident, but also a little different. Here they are partly national—Miss Bowen has herself remarked that 'national pre-assumptions show in treatment of foreigners'. (*Collected Impressions*, p.259). This novel is another tragedy of disparity. Karen Michaelis is the well-to-do, family-minded English girl with her roots in the cultured upper middle class. 'Karen had grown up in a world of grace and intelligence.' The people of her world 'are not rococo like the aristocracy are supposed to be, or like the middle class, tangles of mean motives'. (Miss Bowen gives herself away here—the aristocracy are supposed to be 'rococo'; the middle class are 'tangles of mean motives'.) Karen, romantically rebellious against the cut-and-dried

pattern of her life, falls in love with the fiancé of her friend Naomi Fisher. Max Ebhart, whose illegitimate child she bears (after his suicide) is a French middle-class Jew, intelligent, astute, ambitious, but without 'background'. The scales are not so heavily weighted against him as against Markie. He 'no doubt could have been a gentleman had he wished', but he is complex, neurotic, undependable. As Mrs Michaelis says, 'You can't see into the mind of a man like that'. He kills himself, presumably, because, goaded by the satanic Mme Fisher, he recognizes that he is 'a tangle of mean motives'.

In *The Death of the Heart*, Portia, despite her poor adulterous old father and her obscure and frowsy mother, and despite her life spent in the back rooms of second-rate hotels, is tenuously upper middle class; she has, as even Anna admits, inherited the Quayne 'distinction'. Anna reflects: 'At the same time she has inherited everything; she marches about this house like the Race itself.' On the other hand Eddie, the cynical, unreliable, hysterical, posing young man scraping a parasitic living out of his charm, who (like Markie with Emmeline) is unable to return Portia's love, is described as being 'the brilliant child of an obscure home . . . He had a proletarian, animal, quick grace'. It is obviously significant of his lack of background that Eddie appears to have no surname.

It is not, however, in the portrayal of Eddie that Miss Bowen's social pre-assumptions are most evident in this novel, but rather in the central section of the book, 'The Flesh'. This part records Portia's visit to the seaside, and depicts her chance acquaintances—Daphne and Dickie, Clara and Cecil, Evelyn and Mr Bursely—with a scarcely disguised cold derision. The seaside gang, as Raymond Mortimer remarked in a review, 'positively smells'. He added: 'I am not sure why we are given so much of them, unless the characters . . . ran away with their inventor, but they are so odiously alive that no reader could honestly wish them curtailed.'<sup>8</sup> Many readers since have wished them curtailed, feeling that this particular novel was not the place for such an extended exhibition of their follies. This central section is devastating in its exposure of provincial lower-middle-class vulgarity, but its tone, after all, is more Evelyn Waugh than Elizabeth Bowen. In presenting this petty bourgeois circle of cinema cashiers, bank clerks and non-reading librarians, Miss Bowen's moral angle ceases to be 'impersonal'. Whereas the treatment of Portia, Eddie, Thomas, Anna and St Quentin shows all of Miss Bowen's fine perception and poetic insight, the portrayal of the Heccombs and their friends is external and superficial. They are as flat as photographs, observed with a supercilious sneer of well-bred derision and distaste, which occasionally becomes

over-explicit, particularly in the description of their clothes—'The young men wore plus fours, pullovers, felt hats precisely dented in at the top, and ribbed stockings that made their calves look massive. Daphne and Evelyn wore berets, scarves with dogs' heads and *natty* check overcoats.' This section certainly shows Miss Bowen's talent for exposing the *snobisme* of the *déclassé* middle class; unfortunately the effect of this section is to cheapen the whole book, for one remembers that Bennett and Wells and several of Miss Bowen's contemporaries found more than an object of derision in just such people.

In Miss Bowen's more recent novel, *The Heat of the Day*, (which followed a silence of almost Forsterian length) the social pre-assumptions become more glaring. The heroine and her lover are here very clearly representatives of opposed social camps; now it is implied that lack of breeding and background is not only a wrecker of private happiness, but also a menace to the nation. In this book Stella Rodney's connection with the landed gentry is briefly, but definitely, established.

'Her own extraction was from a class that has taken an unexpected number of generations to die out—gentry till lately owning, still recollecting, land. A handsome derelict gateway opening on to grass and repeated memorials round the walls of a church still gave some sort of a locale, however distant, to what had been her unmarried name.'

Though uprooted by economic change and war, Stella has retained her integrity and her sense of her country's past. Jocelyn Brooke has said of Miss Bowen that

'above all things she is an exceedingly civilized person, both in herself and in her writing. By civilization I mean that complex of habits, tastes, inherited codes of behaviour, etc., which, in a highly organized society, serves as a kind of protective barrier against the barbarous and anarchic elements surviving in that society.'<sup>9</sup>

Here more clearly than ever before Stella Rodney is the 'protective barrier', while Robert Kelway, her lover and the betrayer of his country, represents 'the barbarous and anarchic elements'. Kelway, perhaps the most shadowy of all Miss Bowen's principal males, comes from a pushing, clumsy middle-class family—people with no sense of tradition and continuity, dominated by the wish to sell at a profit, who think of their home as a poor investment. A *Times Literary Supplement* reviewer remarked:

'Too much significance is attached to the aggressive middle-classness of the Kelways: it is to be inferred that Miss Bowen presents revolt against his bourgeois origin as sufficient reason for Robert's startling political defection.'<sup>10</sup>

But it might equally be inferred that Miss Bowen presents his *bourgeois origin itself* as sufficient reason for Robert's treason. Robert's incoherent attempt at self-justification and explanation might be interpreted either way.

'Dunkirk was waiting there in us—what a race! A class without a middle, a race without a country. Unwhole. Never earthed in—and there are thousands and thousands of us, and we're still breeding—breeding what? You may ask; I ask, not only nothing to hold, nothing to touch. No source of anything in anything.'

The portrayal of Robert's family strengthens the impression that Miss Bowen places the ex-gentry on the side of the angels, and regards the money-making middle class as capable of anything. Walter Allen considers the sketch of Robert's family background 'perhaps Miss Bowen's most perfect piece of social comedy' . . . 'a superbly funny study of a family dominated by the lust to sell at a profit'.<sup>11</sup> The sections devoted to the Kelways *are* funny, but one would have to be strangely insensitive to see them as only funny. They are funny in the same way as Miss Compton-Burnett's studies of family life are funny—it is a comedy blended with horror. Miss Bowen, in her portrayal of the Kelways (particularly of Mrs Kelway), is not merely amused, satirical, contemptuous as she was in her portrayal of Daphne and Dickie: there is an element of disquiet, almost of fear, in her attitude. She (or Stella) sees the Kelways as, in some obscure way, menacing.

'You could not account for this family headed by Mrs Kelway by simply saying that it was middle-class, because that left you asking middle of what? She saw the Kelways suspended in the middle of nothing. She could envisage them so suspended when there *was* nothing more. Always without a quiver as to their state.'

There is strong implication that the cancer of treason had its roots in Robert's early family life; but this, like everything else connected with Robert, is left obscure.

The sections of the novel concerning the visits of Stella and her son Roderick to Mount Morgan, the Irish estate that Roderick inherits, have been highly praised by some critics. Certainly they are beautifully written, but these Irish episodes seem to be chiefly important on the level of allegory. They further reinforce the im-

pression that the underlying and unadmitted theme is the emotional and spiritual value of property. Robert Kelway is devoid of this sense. (He protests: 'To unload the past on a boy like that—fantastic! And now you mix yourself up in it. No, it's too silly, Stella.') He passes information to the enemy. Stella and Roderick have it. ('He was left possessed, oppressed and in awe. He heard the pulse in his temple beating into the pillow; he was followed by the sound of his own footsteps over his own land.') They are sound at heart.

This question is of considerable importance, in view of Miss Bowen's insistence that the 'moral angle' of 'any novelist who wishes to state poetic truth' should be 'pure of pre-assumptions—national, social, sexual'. Miss Bowen is obviously such a novelist, but one cannot feel that, despite a conscientious effort to do so, she has always succeeded in writing 'from outside her own nationality, class and sex'. Two main pre-assumptions can be detected in her work—first, that men are rather more likely than not to be unreliable, unfaithful, undependable; secondly, that 'niceness' (Miss Bowen's own word) is seldom to be found outside a certain subclass, and that the middle class is quite free of any taint of it. These pre-assumptions, especially in combination, sometimes cause a failure of sympathy on Miss Bowen's part which makes Edward Sackville-West's implied comparison of her to George Eliot seem a little absurd.<sup>12</sup>

Miss Bowen's latest novel, *A World of Love* (1955) shows her realization that, in attempting to extend her range in the preceding four years, she had allowed her pre-assumptions to become more and more apparent, and had thereby flouted one of the chief items in her novelistic creed. In this novel she has retreated into what many consider her own special territory—the feminine (especially youthfully feminine) sensibility. She has eliminated the sexual pre-assumption that men are more likely than not to be vulgarians and villains by introducing no living male character of real importance. The novel is unique in that it has no hero; its emotional centre is a packet of love-letters (none of which is reproduced) written by a man dead years before the young heroine, Jane (who unearths the letters and is greatly affected by them) was born. It is only in the last line of the novel that Jane meets the corporeal being whom she is to love. ('They no sooner looked but they loved.')

Moreover Miss Bowen has skirted the pitfalls of her social pre-assumptions by concentrating attention almost exclusively on the five members (four of them female) of an intimately interconnected family group, whom she isolates almost completely from the social context in a run-down Irish country house. The neighbouring

wealthy parvenu Englishwoman (suggestively named Lady Latterly) is not allowed sufficient space, and is not treated with sufficient asperity, to disrupt the novel's harmony of tone. For the most part we are confined in the little world of feeling—smouldering and frustrated or disturbing and transfiguring—which is the legacy of the dead Guy.

There is little question that *A World of Love* is a more harmonious, more nearly 'perfect' novel than its predecessors. But it is a limited, claustrophobic perfection—a perfection based on elimination and evasion.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> 'Elizabeth Bowen's Fiction,' *Partisan Review* XVI (November, 1949), p.1.

<sup>2</sup> *Elizabeth Bowen* (London, 1952), p.30.

<sup>3</sup> 'The Future of Fiction,' *New Writing and Daylight*, VII, (1946), p.90.

<sup>4</sup> *Modern Irish Fiction* (Dublin, 1950), p.152.

<sup>5</sup> *The Destructive Element* (London, 1935), p.129.

<sup>6</sup> 'Fiction Chronicle,' *Criterion* (October, 1938), p.91.

<sup>7</sup> *Elizabeth Bowen*, p.10.

<sup>8</sup> *New Statesman and Nation*, October 8, 1938, p.534.

<sup>9</sup> *Elizabeth Bowen*, p.4.

<sup>10</sup> March 5, 1949, p.152.

<sup>11</sup> *New Statesman and Nation*, February 26, 1949, p.276. It should be mentioned that Miss Bowen has provided herself with an escape clause, at least as far as her acid portrayal of the middle-class is concerned. 'N.B.—"Humour" is the weak point in the front against pre-assumptions. Almost all English humour shows social (sometimes, now, backed by political) pre-assumptions.' (*Collected Impressions*, p.259). Her own humour, especially in *The Death of the Heart* and *The Heat of the Day*, ceased to be an exception to this general rule.

<sup>12</sup> 'Ladies Whose Bright Pens . . .', *Inclinations* (London, 1949), p.103.

BERT BRECHT'S HITLER  
A STUTTGART PRODUCTION OF  
*THE RESISTIBLE RISE OF ARTURO UI*

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THE most notable event in the German theatre, this season, has been the first performance of Brecht's parable of the rise of Hitler, *Der aufhaltsame Aufstieg des Arturo Ui* (1941).

For the purpose of this production the 'Berlin Ensemble'—the theatre which Brecht founded and directed in East Berlin—placed at the disposal of the Stuttgart Schauspielhaus an expert producer, Peter Palitzsch, and an excellent actor for the leading role, Wolfgang Kieling. Thoroughly trained in the school of Brecht, these men could be trusted to handle his Arturo Ui with authority; and their success was remarkable.

In this play there is a double application of Brecht's technique of *Verfremdung* (perhaps 'defamiliarisation', if the word can be tolerated, is the least misleading translation). The first application involves the restatement of the German situation in American terms. The Germany of the early thirties is represented by Chicago. Hitler appears as Arturo Ui, the successful rival of Al Capone and leader of a gang whose most prominent members are Ernesto Roma (Ernst Röhm), the vain and bloodthirsty Emanuele Giri (Göring) and the mendacious Giuseppe Civola (Goebbels). Old Dogsborough, inn-keeper and local politician, stands for Hindenburg, Dullfeet for Dollfuss; while the Prussian Junkers are represented by the great Chicago Cauliflower Trust, suffering under the effects of the world economic depression.

We see how the economic situation drives the Trust to suborn Dogsborough and to seek the protection of Arturo Ui—we witness the mock trial after the great Warehouse Fire, the doped victim, the passionate speech of the Counsel for the Defence (Dimitroff)—then the consolidation of Arturo's power—the treacherous murder of Roma—the assassination of Dullfeet and the annexation of the small neighbouring community he had controlled.

All these events are presented—and this is the second application of *Verfremdung*—in what Brecht calls the grand manner (*der grosse Stil*) of the Elizabethan stage. These Chicago gangsters and super-greengrocers address each other in blank verse with occasional rhyming couplets. There are echoes of *Macbeth* and of *Richard III*.

And, of course, all the usual devices of Brecht's anti-illusionist theatre are also employed. No gradual, oblique exposition in the realist style!—a young woman, her face painted to resemble a mask, leaps from one of the boxes onto the stage and introduces severally the *dramatis personae*. The curtain is too flimsy to conceal the scene-shifting, but serves as a cinema-screen for the captions explaining the political allusions. There are soliloquies, passages spoken in unison, songs, choruses, and a masterly parody—at once gruesome and grotesque—of the garden-scene in *Faust*, the club-footed Civola (Goebbels, Mephistopheles) walking hand in hand with Dullfeet (Dollfuss, Frau Martha), while Arturo Ui (Hitler, Faust) passionately woos Betty Dullfeet (the wife of Dollfuss, Gretchen, Austria).

Critics in both East and West have objected that this cauliflower-parable hardly does justice to the complexity of German history in the period of Hitler's accession to power. 'Where does the people come in?' cry the eastern critics. 'Surely,' the western complain, 'the Nazi régime wasn't merely due to the shortcomings of the Capitalist system!' Brecht was, of course, aware of his simplifications; but apart from the fact that all history, and especially all historical drama, must simplify, Brecht's critics overlook the fact that simplification is essential to his art, that without simplification he would lose much of his power and effectiveness. For—as might be expected of a convinced Marxist—Brecht's drama is essentially an 'activist' drama, it consistently aims at inspiring political action. His plays are, as he says, didactic (*Lehrstücke*), but their didacticism is dynamic. Their purpose is to impart knowledge of reality, but also to inspire the will to alter reality. Hence the knowledge imparted must not be too complex and confusing. It must not be the kind of knowledge that paralyses action but the kind that makes action inevitable. The issues must be clear, the alternatives indubitable, the intricacies unravelled.

Judged by the standard of Shakespeare or Goethe, such plays must seem narrow and partial. That is their weakness. But what they lose in breadth and permanent validity, they may to some extent regain in force of immediate impact. As Brecht himself suggested,<sup>1</sup> his didactic drama is most closely related, not to Shakespeare or Goethe but—strange as this may seem in the work of a Communist (or is it really not so strange?)—to the mediaeval mystery plays, the classical Spanish drama and the Jesuit theatre. These examples may warn us not to underestimate the possibilities of this kind of drama in the hands of an artist of genius.<sup>2</sup>

But it is not only by simplification that the parable-form serves the purposes of dynamic didacticism. It serves these purposes also

by presenting the problem in unfamiliar terms and compelling us to look at it from a fresh point of view. Nowhere is this more salutary than in the domain of politics, where our perception is continually being blunted by our own inertia and by the damnable iteration of the propagandists, until the plainest and most vigorous words are reduced to meaninglessness or perverted to denote the very opposite of their proper sense. It becomes necessary to break out of this charmed circle; to restate the issue in a form which—precisely because of its oddity and eccentricity—still has some power to make an impression on our minds; and presumably this is the reason why great political satirists such as Swift and Orwell have so readily resorted to parables and allegories. In Brecht's work the parable combines with the anti-illusionist effects to carry strangeness to the point of estrangement. The *Verfremdung* leads to *Entfremdung*. The audience is not only to remain detached and critical in relation to the events on the stage; it is not only to be astonished by what it sees; it is to be revolted by it and fired with the determination to alter it. As Brecht puts it: 'The audience is summoned to establish its emancipation from the society represented and from the representation itself.'<sup>3</sup> No words could reveal more clearly the political roots of this dramatic technique.

Only in one respect the Stuttgart production seemed to be at variance with Brecht's theory—in respect to the acting. I did not have the impression that Kieling, as Arturo Ui, stood outside of his part and refrained from identifying himself with it. He did not appear to be shy of *Einfühlung*, nor to speak his lines—as Brecht would have it—as if they were quotations.<sup>4</sup> I would rather agree with the critic of the *Stuttgarter Nachrichten*, Hermann Missenharter, that the acting was emotional throughout (*durchweg emotional*); and it is possible that the powerful effect of the play was in some measure due to this fortunate infringement of theory. Powerful the effect certainly was, and not dissimilar in quality to that Aristotelian pity and terror which Brecht regarded it as his mission to combat. He has remarked somewhere that his didactic theatre achieves its purpose if the audience can be induced to adopt the contemplative attitude of the pipe-smoker. If smoking had been permitted at this performance, I think most smokers would have forgotten to puff.

Are we to conclude, then, that Brecht's theory is in some manner inadequate or unsound? I would rather suggest that, in its earlier formulations, it is somewhat overstated<sup>5</sup> (he obviously goes too far, for example, when he describes his theatre as a 'scientific theatre'). The significance of the *Verfremdungseffekt* probably does not consist mainly in its power—if it really has the power—to destroy

dramatic illusion and save the audience from complete absorption. Its more important advantage is that it frees the dramatist from the trammels of realism and enables him to present his material with the necessary abbreviations, simplifications, fresh perspectives—and with whatever degree of illusion the particular occasion demands.

In its account of the historical facts Brecht's play conforms to the accepted Marxist view. The establishment of the Nazi régime is seen as a consequence of economic crisis. Capitalism in its decline seeks to escape destruction by resorting to gangsterism. The leader of the gang establishes himself as dictator, but retains his alliance with the Capitalist forces to which he owes his supremacy. Arturo Ui expresses his social philosophy as follows :

Der Arbeitsmann ist aus der heutigen Welt  
ob man ihn billigt oder nicht, nicht mehr  
hinwegzudenken. Schon als Kunde nicht.  
Ich habe stets betont, dass ehrliche Arbeit  
nicht schändet, sondern aufbaut und Profit bringt.  
Und hiemit nötig ist. Der einzelne Arbeitsmann  
hat meine volle Sympathie. Nur wenn er  
sich dann zusammenrottet und sich anmasst  
da dreinzureden, wo er nichts versteht  
nämlich, wie man Profit herausschlägt und so weiter  
sag ich : Halt, Bruder, so ist's nicht gemeint.  
Du bist ein Arbeitsmann, das heisst, du arbeit'st.  
Wenn du mir streikst und nicht mehr arbeit'st, dann  
bist du kein Arbeitsmann mehr, sondern ein  
gefährliches Subjekt, und ich greif zu.

(Whether you like him or dislike him  
the working-man is indispensable  
in present-day society, if only  
as customer. I've always emphasised  
that honest work is no disgrace, but rather  
something constructive, something necessary :  
a source of profit. Th' individual worker  
has all my sympathy. But when he bands  
together and presumes to interfere  
in things he doesn't understand, for instance  
how profits can be made, and such like matters—  
then *I* say : Stop, brother ! that's not th'idea.  
You are a working-man, i.e. you *work*,  
but if you go on strike and cease to work,  
then you're a working man no longer, you're  
a dang'rous piece of work, and I take action!)

But the deepest interest of the play does not lie here. It lies, rather, in the analysis of the mentality of the political gangster. This is the task to which Kieling devoted all his skill. Eschewing too facile expedients such as the imitation of Hitler's appearance or mannerisms, he left us in no doubt that we had the essential Hitler before us. It was this that gave the play its unusual power and seriousness and made most dramatic productions of to-day seem so trivial in comparison. The grand Elizabethan manner, Brecht tells us, was adopted here for satirical purposes, it was intended to set off the pettiness and meanness of these modern heroes. But such is the passion with which the play is written—so intense is Brecht's loathing, so urgent his sense of danger—that there are times when the Elizabethan style has anything but a satirical effect, when it actually appears to be the proper and adequate style of the play. In *Dogsborough's* soliloquy, for example, or in the scene where Arturo Ui is haunted by the voice of his murdered friend Roma. At such moments the careless and derisive blank verse can suddenly become poetry:

Am Grund von Teichen sieht man manchmal Aeste  
grün und verschleimt, es könnten Schlangen sein  
doch sind's wohl Aeste, oder doch nicht? Ja  
so gleichst du diesem Roma . . .

The performance was warmly applauded by most of the audience but not by all. This is exactly what Brecht would have wished; for it was not his aim to unite a whole audience in enthusiastic approval, but to excite criticism and discussion, to provoke conflicts of opinion, to 'split the public', as he expresses it ('die nicht aris-totelische Dramatik . . . spaltet ihr Publikum'<sup>6</sup>). In fact, not only the audience but also the professional critics were deeply divided in their judgement of the play. One critic<sup>7</sup> described it as 'a brilliant abortion' (*eine geniale Missgeburt*), while also maintaining that it 'towered far above the average level of contemporary dramatic writing'. The criticisms in the *Düsseldorfer Nachrichten* and the *Süd-deutsche Zeitung* were entirely favourable, while Heinz Beckmann in the *Rheinischer Merkur* was so implacably hostile that it may be worth while to consider for a moment the reasons for his bitterness. 'To sum up,' Beckmann writes, 'we have never concealed the fact that Bert Brecht was a considerable poet, a dramatist of quality . . . But in view of his needless collaboration with the oppressors of our brothers in the Soviet Zone, we won't submit to being lectured by him, of all people, on the subject of Adolf Hitler. We know of more recent models of his Arturo Ui . . .'<sup>8</sup> In another passage of his article he seems to reproach the Stuttgart theatre for performing the

play, and he certainly mentions with approval the refusal of the Zurich theatre to perform any play by Brecht. He must be understood, therefore, to favour a boycott of Brecht in western Europe.

The critic of *Die Welt* does not go to these lengths, but he repeats the same accusation against Brecht: 'The hand that wrote this play in 1941, didn't it also write the congratulatory telegram to Ulbricht on the suppression of the Berlin rising in 1953?'

But is this accusation well-founded? Wolfgang Paul, in the November issue of *Neue deutsche Hefte*, has adduced strong evidence to show that Brecht did *not* congratulate Ulbricht on the defeat of the Berlin rising; that the sympathy and approval expressed in his message to Ulbricht referred in all probability to an earlier action of the Government (the proclamation of the so-called 'new course' which promised a certain liberalisation of conditions in East Germany); and that it was only by a clever trick of the Communist propagandists that Brecht's words were made to *appear* to refer to the events of June 17. How little he sympathised with the Government on this occasion, is evident from a poem which Paul communicates from Brecht's *Nachlass*:

Nach dem Aufstand des 17. Juni  
Liess der Sekretär des Schriftstellerverbandes  
In der Stalinallee Flugblätter verteilen  
Auf denen zu lesen war, dass das Volk  
Das Vertrauen der Regierung verscherzt habe  
Und es nur durch verdoppelte Arbeit  
Zurückerobern könne. Wäre es da  
Nicht einfacher, die Regierung  
Löste das Volk auf und  
Wählte ein anderes?

(After the rising of the 17th June the Secretary of the Writers' Association had leaflets distributed in the Stalinallee in which it was stated that the people had forfeited the confidence of the Government and could only regain it by redoubled industry. Wouldn't it be simpler if the Government were to dissolve the people and elect another?)

There is evidence, indeed, that Brecht's conscience was not clear. In a poem of the summer of 1953 he speaks of broken, work-worn fingers pointing at him as at a leper. Neither at that time nor later is there any indication that Brecht had become converted to western ways of thinking, or that he had any sympathy with the policy of the Federal Republic; but he may have felt that fidelity to his own principles called for a bolder, more open resistance to Ulbricht's

régime than he had dared to offer. That his resistance was not inconsiderable is, nevertheless, certain. In another poem of the year 1953 he publicly attacked the 'narrow-minded authorities' who were stifling freedom of artistic expression in Eastern Germany; he struggled with the censor to secure publication of his pacifist writings; and he saw his plays removed from the stage because of their deviations from the 'Party line'.<sup>9</sup> There is reason to believe that towards the end of his life his opposition to the dictatorship was becoming more determined. Willy Haas reports<sup>10</sup> that Brecht was deeply impressed by the Polish struggle for independence and that he was occupied, in the last few months of his life, with the translation of the poems of Adam Wazyk, one of the bitterest critics of Communist conformity.

This is a rather different picture of Brecht from that which Heinz Beckmann offers his readers, and we should remember that Paul and Haas have gone into these matters more thoroughly than Beckmann and were in a better position to know the truth about them. On a basis of unchecked facts and unsubstantiated charges, Beckmann has seen fit to suggest that the best German dramatist of recent times is unworthy of a hearing and that the public should be denied the opportunity to hear him. In making this suggestion Beckmann is not only guilty of an injustice to Brecht; he is not only deepening still further the profound schism which is rapidly depriving East and West German of every intellectual contact, every possibility of mutual understanding; he is also overlooking the importance, for Germany, of the message of Brecht's play. Beckmann may feel that warnings against the menace of Fascism are no longer necessary, that this problem has been solved, so far as Germany is concerned, and that the only serious danger that remains is the Communist danger. But this is to forget that one of the worst dangers of Communism is that it tends, by reaction, to *produce* Fascism. There are few countries in the modern world which are absolutely secure against this danger, and Germany is not one of them. Certainly the majority of Germans are sincerely devoted to democracy. It would be unjust to question that. But it does not follow that Nazi ideology is dead. Anti-Semitism, for example, though abhorred by the bulk of the people, still persists among a dangerous minority; and it is significant that the Bonn Correspondent of *The Times* could suggest as a contributing factor 'the survival of so many ex-Nazis in public office'.<sup>11</sup>

Far from agreeing with Beckmann that it would be beneath his dignity to submit to a lecture on Hitler by Bert Brecht, I would suggest that Germans of both East and West would do well to study

Brecht's lecture with the utmost care, paying special attention to the Epilogue:

Ihr aber lernet, wie man sieht statt stiert  
und handelt, statt zu reden noch und noch.  
So was hätt einmal fast die Welt regiert!  
Die Völker wurden seiner Herr, jedoch  
dass keiner uns zu früh da triumphiert—  
der Schoss ist fruchtbar noch, aus dem das kroch.  
(For your part learn to *see*, not just to stare,  
To *act*, not just to air your wise opinion.  
That creature all but conquered world-dominion!  
The nations overcame him, but beware!  
Don't triumph all too soon, and don't forget—  
The womb that spawned that thing is fertile yet!)

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> *Schriften zum Theater*, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1957, p.72.

<sup>2</sup> The activist intention may explain the strange title of the play. It would have been more usual to say 'Der *unaufhaltsame* Aufstieg . . .' (The Irresistible Rise . . .); but Brecht is never willing to admit the impossibility of effective action. He chooses therefore the challenging word *aufhaltsam* (resistible).

<sup>3</sup> *Stücke*, vol. V, p.134.

<sup>4</sup> *Schriften zum Theater*, p.109.

<sup>5</sup> Compare the later, more guarded exposition in the 'short dramaturgical conversation' entitled 'Einige Irrtümer über die Spielweise des Berliner Ensembles', *Sinn und Form*, Zweites Sonderheft Bertolt Brecht, Berlin 1957, p.244 ff.

<sup>6</sup> *Schriften zum Theater*, p.59.

<sup>7</sup> Siegfried Melchinger, *Die Stuttgarter Zeitung*, Nov. 21, 1958.

<sup>8</sup> *Der rheinische Merkur*, Nov. 28, 1958.

<sup>9</sup> See Paul's article, *Neue deutsche Hefte*, Nov. 1958, p.719, p.721 f, p.715.

<sup>10</sup> *Die Welt*, July 17, 1958.

<sup>11</sup> *The Times*, Jan. 8, 1959.

# FRANZ KAFKA'S STORIES IN THE FIRST PERSON

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OF the sixty-eight prose pieces contained in the volumes *Erzählungen* and *Beschreibung eines Kampfes* by Franz Kafka, forty-five are in the first person and twenty-three in the third person. Even after one has excluded the fifteen or sixteen very short pieces that scarcely belong to the category of narrative (e.g. *Von den Gleichnissen* and a number of the pieces originally published by Kafka in the volume *Betrachtung*), the proportion of first-person to third-person pieces remains approximately the same. This is obviously an unusually high proportion of first-person stories and suggests a definite preference for first-person narration by Kafka in his shorter works. However, this preference in itself does not make Kafka unique amongst story-tellers, since a number of other authors (e.g. E. A. Poe) also reveal a marked liking for the first-person form. Much more important is the way in which Kafka handles the first-person form. Many of his stories must be regarded as radical departures from the traditional first-person narrative and are just as unusual and as individual in their technique as in their subject matter, though it is naturally the unusualness of the latter that impresses the reader most.

In very general terms, Kafka's innovations in the first-person story are:

- 1 The achievement of a remarkable effect of presentness in the narration of past incidents. This effect is to be found mainly in those works that employ the basic data of the traditional narrative: i.e. a chronological series of more or less casually related incidents.
2. The introduction of a type of story that approaches the report rather than the narrative. The main examples of this type of story take as their basic data an existing situation or state of affairs rather than a pattern of past incidents.

## 1 THE ACHIEVEMENT OF PRESENTNESS IN THE NARRATIVE

The short story in the first person became a widely practised form during the nineteenth century. Authors such as E. A. Poe established a narrative pattern that is still valid for most first-person short stories today. This traditional first-person short story has the follow-

ing characteristics: it is told in the first person singular, in the past tense, with the narrator either the principal character or a secondary character who is in a position to survey the whole of the action. The story proper may be set in a framework, the links between the story proper and the framework ranging from very loose to very close. In all first-person stories, and particularly in the framework stories, reference may be made to the process of writing down the story, to the act of narration itself, and to the present of the narrator as opposed to the past of the incidents narrated. Even where no mention of the act of narration occurs, it is customary for the sake of verisimilitude for the author to ensure that the circumstances of the story are such that the material ostensibly written down by the narrator could in some way get to the reader (e.g. the manuscript found in a bottle in Poe's story of that name.)

Two of Kafka's departures from this pattern of traditional narrative are striking, but not unique. For a start, the framework has disappeared completely. None of the stories contains anything that could be regarded as even the simplest and most elementary framework. The only possible exception is *Ein altes Blatt*, in which there is some approach to the chronicle framework beloved of Storm. The title suggests that the story is actually an old manuscript. But this suggestion is confined to the title and is no way elaborated in the story itself. Closely linked with this disappearance of the framework is the disappearance of the secondary character as narrator. Kafka clearly has no interest in presenting the principal character of any story, and the incidents in which he is involved, through the eyes of a more or less impartial observer. The protagonist must tell his own story. The only exception to this principle amongst the narratives is *Der Riesenmaulwurf*, in which the village schoolmaster is at least as important a figure as the narrator and is seen through the eyes of the narrator. We shall see later that *Josefine, die Sängerin*, which would seem to be a further exception to the principle of narrator as protagonist, belongs to the category of report rather than narrative. It is also striking that in *Josefine, die Sängerin* the narrating 'I' has become a narrating 'we' and the character and incidents are seen through the eyes of a large group and not through the eyes of a single narrator. But in all the narratives, as opposed to the reports, Kafka follows the principle of narrator as protagonist.

Much more unusual and individual than either of the above departures from the traditional pattern is Kafka's abandonment of any attempt at verisimilitude or probability in the matter of the setting down of the story by the narrator. This feature is seen most clearly in the two stories *Die Brücke* and *Der Geier*, in which the narrators describe their own deaths, and that in the past tense! Obviously the

abandonment of probability can go no further than in these two stories, and there could be no clearer indication that the author sees the essence of first-person narration as direct representation and not as the mediated representation to which it lends itself so well and for which it has traditionally been employed.

Closely linked with the abandonment of the illusion of probability is the recurring feature of the narrator's inability to survey the whole of the action. In any story that does not include representation of the narrator's present, the narrator may act *as though* he cannot survey the whole of the action. That he can in fact survey it, is implied in his narrating events in which he has participated after the events are over. The unusual aspect of Kafka's stories is that the narrator's ability to survey the whole of the action is not stated, not implied, and may even be specifically excluded, either because the incidents are all narrated in the present tense at the moment of happening (e.g. *Der Kübelreiter*), or because, after past events have been narrated, the story ends with a present in which the complications created by the past events have not been resolved (e.g. *Der Schlag ans Hoftor*). Only one of Kafka's narrators is obviously in a position to survey the whole of the action, and that is the narrator of *Der Riesenmaulwurf*. This is the only story in which reference is made to the narrator's present in a narrative of past incidents. ('Das, was ich ihm damals sagte, kann ich fast wortgetreu wiedergeben, da ich es kurz nach der Unterredung notiert habe.') This aspect, plus the departure from the principle of protagonist as narrator, makes *Der Riesenmaulwurf* the most conventional of Kafka's first-person stories from a purely technical point of view.

The inability of the narrator to survey the whole of the action is closely related to Kafka's very frequent use of the present tense in narrative. This use of the present tense is indeed one of the most striking features of Kafka's first-person pieces in general. Of the forty-five first-person pieces, well over half are entirely or mainly in the present tense: a vastly higher proportion than in the work of any other author. Equally unusual is the large number of stories in which Kafka moves from the past tense to the present in the course of a narrative of past events. The historic present may, of course, occur in any narrative, but Kafka changes from past to present with extraordinary frequency. Two good examples are *Das Ehepaar* and the well known *Ein Landarzt*. The latter begins in the normal imperfect of narrative and continues in this tense for about a page. The tense then changes abruptly to the present in the middle of a sentence: 'Doch kaum war es [das Mädchen] bei ihm, umfasst es der Knecht und schlägt sein Gesicht an ihres.' The story then con-

tinues in the present tense until the moment of the doctor's escape, returns briefly to the past, and ends in the present. It may well be that, in *Ein Landarzt*, the tense changes could be interpreted as reflecting different levels of dream-immediacy, but the phenomenon of the abrupt tense change is not confined to stories in which the dream—or nightmare—quality is particularly apparent. It is often as though some inner urge compels the author towards the present, even though he may begin in the past.

These are Kafka's main departures from the pattern of traditional first-person narrative. Some are not exclusive to Kafka, others are used by him alone. The over-all effect of these techniques is to produce an unusual impression of immediacy and presentness. The elimination of the framework and of the secondary character as narrator, the abandonment of the illusion of probability in the settling down of the narrative, the use of narrators who cannot survey the whole of the action, the predominance of the present tense and the abrupt changes from past to present: all indicate a desire on the author's part to reduce to a minimum the mediated nature of first-person narration. The narrating 'I' and the experiencing 'I' are identical in almost all the stories, and the moment of experiencing and the moment of narrating are made to coincide as closely as is possible in narrative art. What the author gives is frequently not the traditional chain of events surveyed at their conclusion by a narrator, but rather each event in the process of being experienced by the narrator. Stories like *Der Kübelreiter* show, instead of a series of situations in which the narrator *has been*, a series of situations in which the narrator *is*. In the most general terms: the effect of Kafka's departures from traditional first-person narration is to show man in the situation of the moment. The essence of traditional narrative, however much the reader may experience past events as present during the process of reading, is to show a pattern of past events. But with Kafka it is as though his narrators are within the event at the moment of narration and are possessed of no more certainty of the future development of the pattern, indeed of no more certainty that there is a pattern at all, than man possesses at any moment of existence.

## 2 THE REPORTS

One of Kafka's most popular stories bears the title *Ein Bericht für eine Akademie* and is ostensibly a report for some learned body prepared by a monkey. The subject of the report is the monkey's own development from its wild state to a state in which it can, amongst things, express itself in the language of human beings. This

is the only story by Kafka in which he uses the word 'report' in the title, though he does call *Beim Bau der chinesischen Mauer* 'ein Bericht' in the body of the story (*Beschreibung eines Kampfes*, p.74). There are, however, some ten stories in all that have, or closely approach, the quality of the official or semi-official report prepared for some higher body. Attention has already been drawn to one striking feature of a number of these reports: namely the extension of 'I' to 'we' (e.g. *Beim Bau der chinesischen Mauer* and *Josefine, die Sängerin*). The narrator is no longer the individual who recreates events in which he participates: he becomes instead the voice of a group, even of a whole people. But group-experiences can scarcely be recreated in first-person narrative unless one figure is placed in the foreground. This Kafka avoids in all his first-person plural stories. Consequently the stress is not upon incident but upon the way in which the group views or reacts to incident or situation. And so the report-like quality becomes more pronounced.

Let us examine briefly the basic features of the report in general. It may report on a single incident in the past, a series of incidents in the past, or a present state of affairs. If it is concerned with a present state of affairs, it will almost certainly include some incidents from the past to show how the present state of affairs arose. The report may be from the point of view of the reporter only or he may regard himself as the spokesman for a group. In all cases it will be an attempt to present relevant information in orderly and methodical form to some person or body not directly concerned. If the report covers a single incident or a series of incidents in the past, then it will not differ radically from normal narrative. The difference will lie mainly in the fact that the report will be concerned with marshalling and presenting information, explanations and interpretations rather than with recreating incident. The obvious example of this type of report is *Ein Bericht für eine Akademie*. Although the monkey could be said to be reporting on a present situation (his humanness) and how it arose, the stress is definitely on a development in the past. This development is now complete: ('Im ganzen habe ich jedenfalls erreicht, was ich erreichen wollte.') and the monkey reports on it. The story bears out the statement made above that a report of this type does not differ radically from normal narrative.

This type of report is used by Kafka in *Ein Bericht für eine Akademie* only. The type of report that obviously appeals most strongly to him is the report on an existing situation or state of affairs. The best example is *Beim Bau der chinesischen Mauer*, though exactly the same type of report occurs in *Zur Frage der Gesetze* and *Die Abweisung*. The reporter in *Beim Bau der chinesischen Mauer*, who

sometimes speaks in the first person singular and sometimes in the first person plural (as a spokesman for 'die Erbauer der Mauer' or 'wir Chinesen'), reports on two main things: the building of the wall in parts and the attitude of the people to the Emperor. Naturally the basic tense of the report is the present, though material relating to the past is presented in the past tense. It is a characteristic of the effective report that it carefully selects its material, schematizes, systematizes, drastically limits the range of its enquiry. If it seeks after all the causes, if it tries to show the state of affairs in its entirety, then the report becomes endless and ineffective. One cannot help feeling that Kafka consciously assumes the role of the bad reporter. He chatters, introduces apparently irrelevant issues, wanders off on to side-tracks and even into apparent dead-ends, thus adding vastly to the complexity of the situation to which the good report should bring clarity.

It is not possible here to undertake any detailed discussion of Kafka's stories of the report type, but others that possess in a high degree the report-like quality of *Beim Bau der chinesischen Mauer* are *Forschungen eines Hundes*, *Josefine, die Sängerin* (in which the reporter is again the spokesman for a group: 'das Volk der Mäuse'), and *Der Bau*. Others might well be added: *Elf Söhne*, *Der Kaufmann*, even *Der Diener*. The common feature is that the narrator is primarily concerned with presenting and analysing aspects of a state of affairs and not with recreating an orderly series of past events.

This brief account of the nature of Kafka's reports has obvious links with our earlier summing up of the nature and effect of Kafka's narrative innovations. Just as the general effect of the narrative innovations is to show the narrator in a chronological series of existing situations, so the general effect of the reports is to present one extended existing situation or state of affairs. Just as the narrators in many of the narratives cannot survey the whole of the action, so the writer of the report on an existing situation is necessarily unable to go beyond this situation to a future. He may describe the present situation and report events that have led up to it, but he cannot depict the future development from this situation. And so we come back to 'man in the situation of the moment'. Both the narratives and the reports are a radical departure from the traditional view of the first-person story as the narration of a series of casually connected past events. Both suggest an outlook that sees life not as order, pattern and development, but rather as a series of isolated moments in which the individual is entrapped, and these moments are further seen as precarious and infinitely complex. Kafka's achievement in suggesting this outlook through his technique in the

first person story becomes even more remarkable when we consider, first, that the first-person form is usually associated with a high degree of mediation rather than with great immediacy and presentness, and, secondly, that Kafka makes no use at all of the two most direct and immediate forms of first-person narration: the diary and interior monologue.

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# L'ART POÉTIQUE APRÈS VALÉRY

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(NOTE. The material that follows represents in its original form a lecture delivered by M. Denat at the sixth biennial Congress of the Association, held at Armidale, New England, in February 1959. The Editorial Board has resolved that, because of its unusual interest, the lecture should appear in these pages exactly as it was delivered.—Ed.).

## I

Je vais commencer par vous citer un texte :

### LE GRAND VIOLON

'Mon violon est un grand violon-girafe;  
j'en joue à l'escalade,  
bondissant dans ses râles,  
au galop sur ses cordes sensibles et son ventre affamé aux désirs  
épais,  
que personne jamais ne satisfera,  
sur son grand cœur de bois enchagriné,  
que personne jamais ne comprendra.  
Mon violon-girafe, par nature, a la plainte basse et importante,  
façon tunnel,  
l'air accablé et bondé de soi, comme l'ont les gros poissons  
gloutons des hautes profondeurs,  
mais avec, au bout, un air de tête et d'espoir quand même,  
d'envolée, de flèche, qui ne cèdera jamais.  
Rageur, m'engouffrant dans ses plaintes, dans un amas de ton-  
nerres nasillards,  
j'en emporte comme par surprise  
tout à coup de tels accents de panique ou de bébé blessé, per-  
çants, déchirants,  
que moi-même, ensuite, je me retourne sur lui, inquiet, pris de  
remords, de désespoir,  
et de je ne sais quoi, qui nous unit, tragique, et nous sépare.'

Ceci n'est pas un texte spécialement choisi par moi : je me suis contenté d'ouvrir, un peu au hasard, *The Oxford Book of French Verse*, seconde édition bien entendu. Peut-être eussé-je été mieux inspiré en choisissant un texte de René Char. Mais maintenant le mal est fait. L'Anthologie du Prof. Boase aurait aussi bien fait l'affaire, mais après tout, puisque l'Université d'Oxford a reçu Cocteau dans ses bras en lui conférant le titre de Docteur, et en

latin (Quid enim ORPHEO, quid PARENTIBUS illis ABOMINANDIS, quid PROLE ABOMINANDA mirabilius?). je m'autorise de cet illustre exemple et précédent. l'*Oxford Book* étant par ailleurs et en principe un livre à mettre entre les mains de tout étudiant.

Vous comprendrez que seul m'anime un noble souci pédagogique. Je ne porterai pas de jugement de valeur.

\* \* \*

Ayant eu plusieurs fois l'honneur d'aider nos étudiants à se débrouiller dans les difficiles passages et défilés de la poésie moderne, d'Apollinaire à René Char, je voudrais tracer des avenues qui permettent de mieux pénétrer ses arcanes, et surtout de mieux l'expliquer, là où l'explication de texte traditionnelle échoue.

L'aspect pédagogique du problème a été fort clairement exposé par René Maryll Albérès dans son *Bilan littéraire du XXe siècle* (Aubier 1956): la littérature française dans son ensemble est humaniste, moraliste, et situe l'homme dans un monde ordonné pour l'homme, la littérature *moderne* est tragique et situe l'homme 'dans un Cosmos qui n'est pas fait pour lui' (p.244). Au moment où ce qui domine l'espace littéraire ce sont des notions telles que la nausée, l'étrange, l'absurde, l'exil, l'imposture, l'échec, le mal, le faux-pas, 'nos recueils de textes, dit-il, pris dans nos trois siècles humanistes ne peuvent souffrir un appendice de textes "modernes" parfaitement hétérogènes à leur structure essentielle' (p.246).

Dans le concret, c'est-à-dire pour nous, dans l'enseignement, cela peut paraître inquiétant simplement. Après un certain nombre d'explications de textes qui nous auront conduit mettons jusqu'au *Cimetière Marin* ou à l'une des *Grandes Odes* il y a tout intérêt à exposer dans ses grandes lignes l'art poétique de Valéry, quitte à donner parfois quelque chose de l'art poétique de Claudel, car Valéry explique merveilleusement notre poésie de Ronsard à Baudelaire et de Racine à Mallarmé et à Valéry lui-même. Mais après? Outre que les théories de Valéry s'appliquent difficilement au courant issu de Lautréamont et de Rimbaud, faudra-t-il s'arrêter aux divers manifestes surréalistes avant de pénétrer dans le moindre texte de la poésie dite moderne?

Et je ferai remarquer ici, à propos du titre donné à cet essai, que la grande masse des écrits valéryens sur la poésie est postérieure non seulement aux débuts d'Apollinaire mais aussi aux premiers surréalistes, c'est pourquoi je m'étendrai peu sur l'art poétique proprement surréaliste, car ce n'est pas seulement la poésie directement liée aux années 1925 qui nous intéresse, mais celle qui recouvre toute une époque, qui montre un ensemble de directions.

dans ce qu'Albérès appelle la 'période d'étalement' du surréalisme où, comme le dit curieusement Léon-Gabriel Gros, 'Ponge est au surréalisme ce que Valéry fut au symbolisme' (*Poètes Contemporains*, 2e Série p.52).

Une seconde remarque a pour objet, la liste des poètes modernes telle qu'on peut la trouver dans l'anthologie du Prof. Boase et dans l'Oxford Book. Il y a d'abord un certain nombre de poètes qu'on trouve dans les deux anthologies: Apollinaire, Jacob, Supervielle, Jouve, St John Perse, Eluard, Michaux, Emmanuel, en somme les valeurs sûres, pas absolument peut-être, du moins en tant que valeurs d'enseignement littéraire. Chose curieuse, Cocteau ne se trouve pas dans l'*Oxford Book* (à quoi donc lui a servi son doctorat honoris causa?) mais il se trouve dans Boase, qui par contre omet Reverdy, Breton, Aragon, René Char et la Tour du Pin.

Quoi qu'il en soit de ces flottements, notre propos sera de montrer d'abord que sur le plan le moins élevé, celui des procédés, la poésie moderne échappe aux prises de l'art poétique si soigneusement élaboré par Paul Valéry. Et elle y échappe aussi plus complètement, ce sera notre seconde partie, par son souci d'absolu métaphysique.

## II

Bien entendu cette poésie échappe à l'*Art Poétique* à la fois plus ancien et plus moderne de Paul Claudel. Dans une lettre de décembre 1941 l'illustre ambassadeur dit rudement à Loys Masson ce qu'il pensait de la nouvelle génération de poètes: 'On dirait une bande de gosses mal élevés qui s'ébrouent, les cheveux au vent, en criant tout ce qui leur passe par la tête' (cf. Louis Perche, *Paul Claudel*, Ed. Seghers 1955).

Pour nous incliner devant le génie de Claudel, remarquons ici que cela est vrai parfois de quelques poèmes des anciens modernes tels Apollinaire, Cendrars et Jacob, ou des modernes modernes tels Prévert ou Pichette, voire Isidore Isou. Mais Claudel a-t-il pu oublier si vite le 'Merde!' retentissant que poussait Rimbaud entrant dans un café?

Même des gens plus proches du modernisme poétique se montrent hérissés et réticents, témoin Jean Cocteau dans son *Discours d'Oxford* (p.15):

'Nul n'ignore plus que la poésie est une solitude effrayante, une malédiction de naissance, une maladie de l'âme. Mais, chose étrange, il semble que cette maladie soit contagieuse, car jamais il n'y eut tant de poètes ou du moins d'écrivains qui se veulent poètes et profitent d'une débâcle du style et des règles pour

tâcher de croire qu'ils le sont et de le faire croire aux autres.'

Laissons pour un moment les académiciens à leur pessimisme, car on a souvent remarqué que la poésie dite classique—et cela va jusqu'à Valéry, j'allais dire Cocteau—a les yeux tournés vers le passé. Poésie de mémoire, le faisait remarquer naguère le professeur Barrère dans son *Regard d'Orphée*, non seulement par ses thèmes, mais par sa musique. Musique de Racine. Musique de Valéry. La poésie dite moderne est apocalyptique dans son ensemble, proclame Jean Paris, dans son *Anthologie de la Poésie Nouvelle* (Monaco. Ed. du Rocher 1956):

'Un art . . . qui prépare l'homme à de nouvelles conceptions du cosmos, et construit dans l'ordre de l'affectivité ce que la science construit dans l'ordre de l'intellect . . .

Prophétique, la poésie assume donc la fonction révolutionnaire de l'utopie: à l'horizon du temps, elle rend possible l'impossible, elle invoque et provoque la future réalité' (p.56).

Dans la poésie moderne nous passons d'un art de l'harmonie à une vision tragique d'un monde en devenir. Or, ce qui frappe dans une Poétique telle que la poétique de Valéry, c'est son statisme. Comme son maître Mallarmé, Valéry croit qu'on fait de la poésie, qu'on fabrique de la poésie, avec des mots bien placés et pour lui ce qui importe avant tout ce n'est pas le prophétisme de l'écumante Pythie, mais le chant. Un chant plein de résonnances passées (il suffit de comparer *la Jeune Parque* avec *Hérodias*), un chant parfois stationnaire et c'est le fameux exemple du sonnet fait pour le *simultané*. S'il y a une image de mouvement dans cette poétique, outre le mouvement nécessaire à toute musique, c'est celle du pendule qui représente l'oscillation calme entre le sens et le son. Mouvement stationnaire. Et bien qu'il faille parcourir le poème pour le goûter, l'image célèbre de la danse-poésie s'opposant à la marche-prose n'échappe pas à ce statisme. Finalement et pour résumer d'un mot, on goûtera Valéry en flânant sous les ombrages d'un parc—botanique de préférence—comme nos pères goûtaient Horace, l'été, près du chant des sources ou du calme des tombeaux, *Narcissae placandis manibus*. Dans le repos. La poésie demande l'*otium cum dignitate*. Nous voilà loin des hurlements modernes.

\* \* \*

Oui, loin, car tout d'abord, au lieu d'être un chant paisible à savourer sous les ombrages, la poésie moderne est le plus souvent un cri. Il suffit de lire René Char, Michaux ou Artaud pour entendre les cris du refus, de la révolte, de l'angoisse. Cri de l'homme émer-

veillé chez St John Perse. Cri à son maximum de tragique chez Artaud, 'spasme de l'être', en un 'rapace besoin d'envol' note Maurice Blanchot après Jean Wahl (*Cahiers de la Compagnie Madeline Renaud-Jean-Louis Barrault*, Mai 1958).

Le cri d'amour prenant la place du chant d'amour est une tendance déjà visible chez Apollinaire.

Le cri à la place du chant annonce, à la place de la danse, un bond, souvent désordonné, vers le futur et l'inattendu. Valéry avait déjà noté ces spasmes du monde moderne et René Char écrit; 'Tu es pressé d'écrire, comme si tu étais en retard sur la vie' (*Poèmes et Prose choisis*, NRF 1957 p.211).

On sait la place que le cirque et le clown tiennent dans la poésie moderne dès ses débuts, et dans l'art de Picasso comme dans celui de Max Jacob ou celui de Michaux. De plus, dans la poésie traditionnelle la rime nous orientait: ici nous sommes désorientés au sens radical du mot, et le poète nous veut ainsi. Reprenant une idée déjà chère à Bergson, à Péguy, à Unamuno écrivant 'tout poète est un hérétique, (*L'Art Poétique*, Seghers 1956 p.673) Henri Pichette s'écrie: 'La poésie est une salve contre l'habitude' (A.P. p.705). Bien entendu, René Char est revenu souvent sur cette idée: le bond qui nous jette hors de la danse accoutumée des conventions littéraires ou autres:

'Etre du bond. N'être pas du festin, son épilogue' (PPc, p.59).

'La poésie est de toutes les eaux claires celle qui s'attarde le moins aux reflets des ponts' (p.94).

'L'aigle est au futur' (p.273).

'Il ne faut pas que ma lyre me devine, que mon vers se trouve ce que j'aurais pu écrire' (p.285).

Si René Char, disciple avoué d'Héraclite, paraît trop contemporain ou trop fulgurant dans sa concision, on pourrait déceler ce dynamisme poétique déjà développé dans Rimbaud, pleinement conscient chez des poètes aussi différents que Jacob, Supervielle, St John Perse ou Michaux, grand ami de Supervielle, ne l'oublions pas. Devant cette nouvelle nécessité du bond le poète moderne a élaboré, sans plan préconçu, toute une esthétique du discontinu, du poème 'pulvérisé', toute une technique du saut, opposée à celle de la danse. Dans une esthétique du discontinu faite pour un monde incohérent et absurde, l'héritage surréaliste du cri de protestation se transforme en une révolte considérée comme un saut, ce que fait Ponge dans ses *Proêmes* (NRF 1948 p.27).

Max Jacob, avant Valéry je crois, disait déjà: 'La poésie moderne saute toutes les explications' (*Art Poétique* p.471) et insistait sur la technique du saut, avec ce qu'elle suppose d'attente, de ramassage

vers l'arrière, de puissance accumulée (ceci en accord avec Valéry):

'Il faut encaisser longuement et retarder la réaction. Plus on retarde, mieux ça vaut' (*Conseils à un jeune poète*, A.P. p.475).

Plus tard Supervielle dira justement:

'C'est dans une image, à l'avant-garde de lui-même, que le poète éprouve le besoin de fixer son esprit toujours en mouvement. Elle lui sert de relais jusqu'à ce que s'élève dans sa nuit personnelle une autre image qui se précise peu à peu. Ainsi se forme la chaîne de tout le poème' (NNRF 1er Mai 1958 p.769).

La fonction de l'image n'est ici que de *relais*, ce n'est pas elle qui importe et comme disaient jadis plaisamment les imagistes russes (dont est plus ou moins issu Pasternak), l'image 'est la naphthaline qui préserve l'ouvrage des mites du temps' (C. M. Bowra. *The Creative experiment*, N. York 1957 p.8).

Ce saut d'image à image ou plus exactement de réalité à réalité est aussi noté par Reverdy, aux débuts du surréalisme:

'Le propre de l'image forte est d'être issue d'un rapprochement spontané de deux réalités très distinctes dont l'ESPRIT seul a saisi les rapports' (*Le Gant de Crin*, Plon 1927, A.P. p.493).

La poésie moderne plus que l'ancienne se trouve donc vouée au mouvement dès son jaillissement, bien avant le déploiement de l'œuvre, en des sortes de pulsions intuitives exactement décrites par Jacques Maritain. Ce dynamisme a été mis en valeur par des écrivains aussi diamétralement opposés que Michaux et St John Perse. Le premier qui, comme Ponge, se déclare assez facilement apoète, nous confie:

'La seule ambition de FAIRE un poème suffit à le tuer (de nouveau, nous voilà aux antipodes de Valéry). J'écris pour me parcourir. Peindre, composer, écrire: me parcourir. Là est l'aventure d'être en vie' (A.P. p.699).

Et le second:

'je m'étonne grandement de voir des critiques favorables apprécier le poème comme une cristallisation, alors que la poésie pour moi est avant tout mouvement—dans sa naissance comme sa croissance et son élargissement final . . . sa métrique aussi, qu'on lui impute à rhétorique, ne tend encore qu'au mouvement et à la fréquentation du mouvement, dans toutes ses ressources vivantes, les plus imprévisibles. D'où l'importance en tout, pour le poète,

de la Mer. (Roger Caillois. *Poétique de St John Perse*. A.P. p.639).

Mais le saut d'image à image, cet imprévisible dans le cataclysme décrit par Aragon première manière :

‘La poésie est par essence orageuse, et chaque image doit produire un cataclysme’ (*Traité du Style*, A.P. p.620).

n'est que la mise en ordre (ou en désordre savant) du poème dont les images doivent être cherchées dans une sorte de ‘plongée’ qui relève aussi du saut, je ne l'apprendrai pas aux nageurs. Bachelard dit justement ‘les forces imaginantes creusent le fond de l'être’ (*L'Eau et les rêves*, Préface, A.P. p.641).

Plongée dans la réalité extérieure, identification à la vie secrète des choses comme chez l'auteur du *Parti-pris des choses*.

Plongée en soi-même comme le recommande Reverdy :

‘Le poète est un plongeur qui va chercher dans les plus intimes profondeurs de sa conscience les matériaux sublimes qui viendront se cristalliser quand sa main les portera au jour’ (*Le Gant de Crin* A.P. p.495).

‘L'acte profondément poétique ne consiste pas, à force de talent littéraire, à noyer le poisson—mais à plonger, le plus avant et le plus aventureusement possible, dans le miroir des gouffres pour scruter ses propres bas-fonds’ (*Le livre de mon bord* A.P. p.505).

Enfin plongée dans la réalité sociale comme le recommandent tous les poètes engagés d'Eluard à Pichette.

Dès 1936, Eluard écrivait :

‘Le temps est venu où tous les poètes ont le droit et le devoir de soutenir qu'ils sont profondément enfoncés dans la vie des autres hommes, dans la vie commune’ (*L'Evidence poétique* A.P. 609).

Tristan Tzara, meilleur théoricien que poète, l'avait déjà longuement dit aux temps de la *Révolution Surréaliste* : ‘La poésie doit être faite par tous, non par un’, mais le tragique, c'est que les autres hommes, du moins au début, ne comprenaient pas ces poètes, d'où le passage d'un Aragon du surréalisme au communisme.

C'est qu'ils se rendaient coupables, tels un personnage de Kafka, du

‘crime de poésie, c'est-à-dire de celui qui consiste à refuser le monde organisé, hiérarchisé et limité par les conventions sociales pour lui en préférer un autre et le revendiquer—unique, irrem-

plaçable et irréductible, fait à l'image de ses rêves les plus intimes' (Jean Bertelé, *Henri Michaux*, Ed. Seghers p.63).

Comment les poètes modernes en sont arrivés à cette attitude de refus, beaucoup plus commune chez eux que l'attitude d'acceptation (bien que le conformisme du refus et de la révolte soit devenu quand même un conformisme) c'est ce qui nous reste à examiner en traitant de leur art poétique, non plus sur le plan des procédés généraux, mais des sources profondes, issues d'une vision nouvelle du monde.

### III

Jusqu'ici nous nous en sommes tenus, en gros, aux *procédés* de la poésie moderne. Et parfois on y voit affleurer certaines idées chères à Valéry, héritier et dernier tenant du symbolisme. D'une certaine façon l'obscurité des modernes peut se réclamer du précédent de Mallarmé, d'ailleurs plus dense et plus strict. A leur propos on pourrait aussi répéter 'qui se hâte a compris'. Et pour eux aussi l'œuvre semble 'le résidu d'une expérience' (cf. Gros, *Poètes Contemporains*, 2e série p.33).

Mais c'est l'expérience fondamentale qui diffère et il va falloir enregistrer un désaccord complet entre Valéry et la poésie moderne quant au but que s'assigne le poète. Pour Valéry, comme pour toute poésie traditionnelle, le poème est un instrument (cf. *Critics and Criticism*, University of Chicago 1956 p.5 et Jean Hytier, *La Poétique de Valéry*, théorie des effets) qui se fabrique, que le poète fait pour une certaine destination. *Poiein*. La poésie est un art comme les autres, et même si on la veut art suprême, elle doit *produire* une œuvre d'art, selon certaines lois (lois qu'un Michaux se refuse à suivre. Cf. Bertelé p.20).

Les poètes modernes ont une toute autre conception de la poésie, déjà en germe dans Claudel : pour eux, sans exclure le plaisir de la trouvaille littéraire, elle est avant tout *connaissance*. Albérès en a donné une explication fort claire, trop claire peut-être :

'On voit pourquoi a disparu la poésie mondaine et décorative : celle-ci ne saurait exister que lorsqu'une croyance commune et socialisée satisfait le besoin religieux : quand les cantiques abondent, ce langage au-dessus du langage qu'est la poésie ne trouve pas son emploi et se joue en festons et astragales. Lorsqu'au contraire le désir d'absolu n'est ni satisfait ni canalisé par une théologie et une mystique communes, la poésie redevient le seul moyen d'accéder à un monde magique et tous ceux qui éprouvent la nostalgie de ce monde s'emparent d'elle et en font leur chose, rejetant de la place les rimeurs plaisants et émouvants, car malgré

tout leur sincérité est alors la plus forte' (*Bilan littéraire du XXe siècle*. Aubier 1956 p.205).

En somme cette poésie se termine, non pas au poème mais à l'objet visé. Rappelons encore une fois cette citation de Michaux : 'La seule ambition de faire un poème suffit à le tuer'. N'est-ce pas une autre expression de la condamnation mallarméenne :

'Le sens trop précis rature  
Ta vague littérature'

ou du conseil de Francis Ponge :

'Une seule issue : Parler contre les paroles. Les entraîner avec soi dans la honte où elles nous conduisent de telle sorte qu'elles s'y défigurent'. (*Proèmes* p.116. Des raisons d'écrire).

Cette poésie nous précipite *en avant*, en dehors, d'où parfois une certaine renaissance malherbienne de l'éloquence persuasive, si visible chez un Pierre Emmanuel et un Pichette. C'est l'objet qu'elle désigne, objet qu'elle veut pénétrer ou créer ou recréer, témoin Ponge qui surenchérit : 'écrire est plus que connaître, au moins plus que connaître analytiquement, c'est refaire' (*Proèmes* p.181).

Finalement le poème joue le rôle d'un concept tendu vers la signification, ou plus exactement vers la chose signifiée. Il est donc vain de chercher exclusivement la beauté dans cette poésie, connaissance qui, humble chez un Ponge, se veut ailleurs prophétique. Les monstres de Michaux, comme ceux de Picasso, préfigurent tragiquement ceux de la guerre, et chez d'autres ceux d'une ère nucléaire—heureusement encore à venir. Valéry l'avait bien senti :

'La Beauté est une sorte de morte. La nouveauté, l'intensité, l'étrangeté, en un mot toutes les valeurs de choc l'ont supplantée.'

Une connaissance créatrice aboutit à une connaissance rivale de Dieu créateur. René Bertelé a parfaitement exprimé cet aspect inquiétant :

'Il est peut-être profitable de mettre Dieu dans son jeu. Mais le jeu devient alors trop facile . . . il est gagné d'avance . . . La création poétique n'est pas seulement une épreuve de force entre le monde "du dedans" et le monde "du dehors", elle est une épreuve de force entre l'homme et Dieu' (*H. Michaux*. Ed. Seghers 1957 p.42).

Ponge veut refaire par écrit la chose qu'il décrit. Les poètes 'engagés', d'Aragon à Pichette, veulent refaire le monde par la révolution, une révolution d'abord exprimée, donc déjà en cours.

Les poètes-prophètes appellent de leurs vœux le futur selon la déjà fameuse formule de René Char : 'L'aigle est au futur', ou selon la formule de Maurice Blanchot : 'Le futur est rendu possible par le poème.'

Dans cette poursuite d'un au-delà du poème les mots cessent d'avoir l'importance que leur attribuaient Mallarmé et Valéry. Parlant de Reverdy, Maurice Nadeau s'exprimait ainsi naguère :

'sa poésie n'est pas à proprement parler formée de mots, mais de vent, de pluie, de soleil, etc. Poésie concrète' (M. Nadeau, *Littérature présente*, Corrèa 1952 p.298).

Et caractérisant la poésie de René Char :

'Le mot n'est plus support mais tremplin qui s'évanouit dans le bond qu'il suscite' (id. p.339).

Jadis Eluard s'écriait :

'Je n'invente pas les mots. Mais j'invente des objets, des êtres, des événements . . .' (*Donner à voir*, Gallimard, 1939, p.146).

Et il suffit de lire un des beaux textes de Ponge pour se trouver installé non pas dans une forêt de symboles, mais en plein milieu d'une huître ou d'un galet.

Sous cette action corrosive, il y a eu des réactions : un Jean Cayrol donne comme titre à un de ses recueils : 'Les mots sont aussi des demeures' (Baconnière 1952). Mais cela va plus loin. Les mots vidés de leur signification ont tendance à être considérés comme des choses étranges par le poète et Sartre l'a longuement montré dans *Situations II* (Qu'est-ce que la littérature, pp.63-70 et note). Cet éblouissement provoqué par les mots, leur fascination tend à remplacer celle de la page blanche et tend à distraire le poète de sa tâche de connaissance et de prophétisme. L'aboutissement est souvent l'échec comme cela peut se percevoir chez des gens aussi différents de formation que Mallarmé, Ponge, Sartre ou Artaud. Echec à prévoir car les poètes et penseurs modernes s'attaquent à la condition humaine elle-même.

\* \* \*

En effet si la poésie contemporaine se veut connaissance et création, il faudrait savoir pourquoi cette connaissance et pourquoi ce besoin de création nouvelle. Il faut donc en arriver finalement à l'idée que se font les poètes de la condition humaine, c'est-à-dire non seulement de l'homme en lui-même tel que le concevrait un humaniste mais de l'homme en situation dans l'univers tel que le

conçoit un existentialiste. D'où ces amitiés permanentes ou temporaires de poètes et de penseurs tels les couples Char-Camus et Sartre-Ponge.

Il est bien vrai que certains poètes modernes acceptent cette condition et se contentent plus ou moins 'du pain tendre et du lait plat'. Maurice Fombeure en est un exemple. D'autres ont recours au voyage comme Audisio ou Brauquier. Mais la plupart refusent cette condition et veulent s'évader à tout prix, même au prix de la mort ou de l'échec final. D'où une attitude de révolte et de refus, attitude déjà romantique, quand Hölderlin salue le 'pays silencieux des morts', attitude qui explique la fin d'un Lautréamont ou d'un Rimbaud. Comment s'échapper de cette condition humaine si peu supportable? Il paraît bien difficile d'échapper à notre prison où le croisement du temps et de l'espace constitue le plus solide des barrages.

Par un recours au biologique? Mais lequel? Le biologique inférieur, le recours au monstre? Concevoir un autre être que l'homme né des caprices de l'évolution créatrice? C'est la tentation d'Henri Michaux, continuant certaines directions de Lautréamont :

'Quand la maladie, aidée des tambours de la fièvre, entreprend une grande battue dans les forêts de l'être, si riche en animaux, que n'en sort-il pas?

Pour le malade, pas d'espèces éteintes. Elles peuvent se réveiller d'un sommeil de quarante mille ans' (Gros, op. cit. p.92).

Et c'est le cauchemar des Meidosems :

'Plus de bras que la pieuvre, tout couturé de jambes et de mains jusque dans le cou, le Meidosem.

Mais pas pour cela épanoui. Tout le contraire : supplicié, tendu, inquiet et ne trouvant rien d'important à prendre, surveillant, surveillant sans cesse, la tête constellée de ventouses. (*La vie dans les plis*. Gall. 1949 p.155).

Dans cette démission vers le biologique inférieur le poète risque son propre moi, nous le verrons plus loin, en expliquant le violongirafe.

Après le biologique inférieur, vient la tentation du biologique supérieur, du surhomme savamment produit, un dépassement auquel nous invite, plus ou moins explicitement, André Breton :

'Transformer le monde' a dit Marx; 'changer la vie' a dit Rimbaud : ces deux mots d'ordre pour nous n'en font qu'un (cf. J. L. Bédouin. *André Breton*, Ed. Seghers 1950 p.26).

Et Breton, surréaliste orthodoxe, nous invite à suivre de très près les développements scientifiques, au risque de nous rapprocher

des dangers signalés par un Huxley ou, ce qui est pire pour la poésie sincère, de la science-fiction, mais après tout il se peut qu'un nouveau *De Natura Rerum* soit possible.

Dans cette fuite de la condition humaine, on peut avoir recours, bien sûr, à toutes les mystiques, depuis le dérèglement des sens rimbaldien jusqu'à l'occultisme prêché par Roland de Renéville, et d'aucuns ont même recours à la mystique orthodoxe d'un Saint Jean de la Croix. Sans aller jusque-là, il est certain qu'un Loys Masson, un Cayrol, un Emmanuel se sont tournés, après Jouve, vers le christianisme.

Cette révolte contre la condition faite à l'homme dans le monde moderne—pour reprendre les termes de Péguy—peut prendre la forme traditionnelle d'une attitude d'exil dans cette vallée de larmes, et on peut avoir recours alors à l'immortalité personnelle de stricte observance, témoin Claudel ou les convertis Jacob, Jouve ou Reverdy, attitude violemment critiquée tant par Breton que par Jean-Paul Sartre.

Enfin d'autres ont recours à certain objectivisme, par la puissance d'images évocatrices, tels Jean Follain et Guillevic. Mais un objectivisme, plus réel d'ailleurs, est aussi le fait tant de Ponge, antimystique qui accepte la condition humaine comme a fini par l'accepter son ami Camus, que de Michaux s'échappant parfois vers la nature morte :

'Je mets une pomme sur ma table, puis je me mets dans cette pomme. Quelle tranquillité!' (Lointain Intérieur).

Toutes ces techniques d'évasion aboutissent finalement, et c'est ce qu'a bien vu Breton, à une condition *sine qua non*, la liberté de l'esprit, maître de son propre développement. Mais la liberté l'avons-nous? et la liberté d'échapper totalement à notre condition terrestre est-elle concevable? En ce sens, toute poésie moderne de refus, tout '*objectivante et rhétoricienne*' (Gros, op. cit. p.246) qu'elle soit, débouche inmanquablement sur des problèmes métaphysiques. Pour une fois, la nuit et le jour, Sartre et Maritain, peuvent être mis d'accord.

Mais revenons maintenant à nos préoccupations plus purement pédagogiques. Je sais, hélas! ce qu'en pensait Mallarmé quant à la poésie :

'Il faudrait qu'on se crût un homme complet sans avoir lu un vers d'Hugo . . . Déjà profanés par l'enseignement . . . Corneille, Molière, Racine, non, ils ne sont pas populaires : leur nom peut-être, leurs vers, cela est faux.'

(Hérésies artistiques. L'Art pour tous. Ed. Pléiade p.260).

Sans aller jusqu'au noble pessimisme mallarméen il faut prendre cependant tout ce que j'ai dit pour introduire à la poésie moderne *cum grano salis*, et je me contenterai ici pour ma défense de citer Léon-Gabriel Gros, un maître du commentaire :

'Il ne saurait être question de dénier toute portée à de tels jugements mais à condition qu'on les tienne pour ce qu'ils sont, c'est-à-dire extrêmement approximatifs. Ils sont propres tout au plus à FACILITER l'abord et la compréhension des œuvres, en aucun cas ils ne les épuisent, en aucun cas ils ne suppléent au contact direct entre l'œuvre et son lecteur, contact aussi miraculeux et mystérieux par essence que l'inspiration elle-même.' (op. cit. p.165).

Et c'est par Paul Valéry qui reste quand même le maître des études poétiques et le restera encore longtemps, que je terminerai cette partie de considérations générales, en lui rendant hommage :

'Il est trop clair que toutes ces classifications et ces vues cavalières n'ajoutent rien à la jouissance d'un lecteur capable d'amour, ni n'accroissent chez un homme de métier l'intelligence des moyens que les maîtres ont mis en œuvre : elles n'enseignent ni à lire ni à écrire.' (*Variété III*. Questions de poésie; p.42).

#### IV

Pourtant je n'en ai pas fini avec Valéry dont l'intelligence est allée très loin dans le futur, et je ne pourrais mieux faire que donner, en avant-goût d'une explication de Michaux, ce texte étonnant tiré de la Petite Lettre sur les Mythes :

'Quand je rêve et invente sans retour, ne suis-je pas . . . la nature? —Pourvu que la plume touche le papier, qu'elle porte de l'encre, que je m'ennuie, que je m'oublie,—je crée! Un mot venu au hasard se fait un sort infini, pousse des organes de phrase, et la phrase en exige une autre, qui eût été avant elle; elle veut un passé qu'elle enfante pour naître . . . après qu'elle a déjà paru! Et ces courbes, ces volutes, ces tentacules, ces palpes, pattes et appendices que je file sur cette page, la nature à sa façon, ne fait-elle de même dans ses jeux, quand elle prodigue, transforme, abîme, oublie et retrouve tant de chances et de figures de vie au milieu des rayons et des atomes en quoi foisonne et s'embrouille tout le possible et l'inconcevable? (*Variété II* pp.228-229).

Il n'est pas de discours si obscur, de raconter si bizarre, de propos si incohérent à quoi nous ne puissions donner un sens. Il

y a toujours une supposition qui donne un sens au langage le plus étrange' (id. p.230).

Ainsi donc c'est Valéry lui-même qui nous ouvre les portes des poètes, non pas hermétiques tels que les voulait Mallarmé, mais simplement difficiles, et maintenant nous pouvons revenir à la girafe du *Grand Violon* que commit le soi-distant antipoète Henri Michaux (souvent proche par quelque endroit de l'apoète Francis Ponge).

Dans *Qui je fus* (1927) Michaux nous dit, bien avant René Char : 'J'étais une parole qui tentait d'avancer à la vitesse de la pensée'—une parole-bond. Et en effet, Bounoure fait remarquer chez Michaux ces 'images en zig-zag', témoignage d'une pensée bondissante. C'est pourquoi il n'est pas indifférent que, dans l'*Oxford Book*, le texte précédant le *Grand Violon* soit celui du *Clown* 'abattant dans la risée, dans l'esclaffement, dans le grotesque, le sens que contre toute lumière je m'étais fait de mon importance' (*Oxford Book of French Verse*, p.583).

'Mon violon est un grand violon-girafe;'

Ici, les deux images du violon et de la girafe recouvrent une troisième image, plus auditive, la plainte du poète, avec un passage constant d'une image à l'autre, Michaux en étant encore alors à l'esthétique du discontinu. Le continu apparaîtra davantage dans le grand poème biologique des Meidosems. Continu encore plein des virevoltes de l'imagination, mais cependant plus proche de l'admirable écriture de Ponge qui nous plonge en plein milieu des objets, nous transvase dans l'objet et l'objet en nous. 'Mon violon' semble sous-entendre la poésie, ou du moins la plainte de l'être Michaux, violon-girafe connotant l'aspect frêle et pâle de l'écrivain. Cette proposition d'ouverture est suivie immédiatement du saut :

'j'en joue à l'escalade,  
bondissant dans ses rôles.'

Style typique de Michaux, du ton de Michaux bien connu :

'Je m'affaire dans mes branchages  
Je me tue dans ma rage  
Je m'éparpille à chaque pas  
je me jette dans mes pieds  
je m'engloutis dans ma salive  
je me damne dans mon jugement  
je me pleure  
je me dis : c'est bien fait !  
je me hurle au secours  
je me refuse l'absolution.' (*Qui je fus*, Gall. 1927).

Un saut et un cri. On voit en même temps, dans une série d'images simultanées la main du violoniste qui court 'au galop sur ses cordes sensibles', et l'écrivain qui court après la parole impuissante à tout noter, alors que 'son ventre affamé aux désirs épais' se réfère assez bien à la girafe tendant à la fois son cou et son ventre vers le sol en écartant ses pattes de devant pour brouter. Avec, au bout, l'insatisfaction poétique de l'échec inévitable de désirs

'que personne jamais ne satisfera,  
que personne jamais ne comprendra'

'ce grand cœur de bois enchagriné' est une image musicale splendide de l'isolement (eh oui! Lamartine dans le lointain!) exprimé déjà dans *Plume* (portrait de A.).

'Jusqu'au seuil de l'adolescence, il formait une boule hermétique et suffisante, un univers dense et personnel et trouble où n'entrait rien, ni parents, ni affections, ni aucun objet, ni leur image, ni leur existence, à moins qu'on ne s'en servît avec violence contre lui. En effet, on le détestait, on disait qu'il ne serait jamais homme.'

Par un saut clownesque, pour corriger cet effet, Michaux prend immédiatement après le ton de l'humour conforme à la poétique de T. S. Eliot, en une phrase qui n'est pas sans rappeler le style de Jacques Perret ou de Jean Dutourd :

'Mon violon-girafe, par nature, a la plainte basse et importante, façon tunnel.'

Nous avons déjà vu dans le texte de *Clown* ce que signifiait pour l'écrivain son 'importance' dont il se moque; quant à l'image du tunnel, image auditive, elle est une des 'obsessions' de Michaux, qui l'emploie souvent et a écrit une *Marche dans le tunnel*, image extérieure de l'espace du dedans, regorgeant d'échos, d'effrois et de sons déformés. Il y aurait ici à ajouter un nouveau chapitre à la *Poétique de l'Espace* de Gaston Bachelard (P.U.F. 1957). Mais continuons notre survol. Le violon-girafe a 'l'air accablé et bondé de soi, comme l'ont les gros poissons gloutons des hautes profondeurs.'

L'expression elle-même est gonflée comme une outre pleine, inquiétante, à la peau fragile mais tendue de Meidosem, cette peau qui est aussi une des obsessions de Michaux, mêlée à une obsession du visqueux biologique primitif que nous avons tous plus ou moins puisque nous en sommes issus. Une visite à la Grande Barrière s'imposerait d'ailleurs à tout lecteur assidu de Michaux. L'air 'bondé de soi' fait allusion à la pluralité des moi, un des thèmes de Michaux :

'La plus grande fatigue de la journée et d'une vie serait due à l'effort, à la tension nécessaire pour garder un même moi à travers les tentations continuelles de le changer. On veut trop être quelqu'un.

Il n'est pas un moi. Il n'est pas dix moi. Il n'est pas de moi. Moi n'est qu'une position d'équilibre (une entre mille autres continuellement possibles et toujours prêtes). Une moyenne de "moi", un mouvement de foule. Au nom de beaucoup je signe ce livre.' (cf. Gros, op. cit. 94).

La désagrégation du moi menace l'homme, mais au contraire le gros poisson glouton préserve jalousement ce moi, car l'animal ne peut s'échapper de son monde intérieur par la conscience ou la connaissance créatrice. Cette préservation appelle la gloutonnerie de l'égoïsme, commune au poisson des hautes (non des grandes) profondeurs, (il y a une nuance) et à l'adolescent rétracté sur son cœur enchagriné. Tout cela enrobé dans l'accablement devant le biologique imprévisible si bien décrit dans les Meidosems, plus conscients que les poissons :

'Ils prennent la forme de bulles pour rêver, ils prennent la forme de lianes pour s'émouvoir . . .

L'élasticité extrême des Meidosems, c'est là la source de leur jouissance. De leurs malheurs aussi . . .

Un Meidosem éclate. Mille veinules de sa foi en lui éclatent. Il retombe, s'étale et s'extravase en de nouvelles pénombres, en de nouveaux étangs.

Qu'il est difficile de marcher ainsi . . .' (*La vie dans les plis*. Gall. 1949).

Continuons cependant à marcher, car au bout du tunnel et du visqueux, il y a l'espoir, et le voilà qui éclate chez le violon-girafe :

'mais avec, au bout, un air de tête et d'espoir quand même, d'envolée, de flèche, qui ne cèdera jamais.'

Ici domine l'image de la petite tête obstinée de la girafe, plongeant dans les airs avec une sorte de balancement, d'un petit air rageur qui ne cèdera jamais, pas plus que l'écrivain, au bout de ses vertèbres cervicales allongées. Plongée en l'air avant la plongée dans les sons :

'Rageur, m'engouffrant dans ses plaintes, dans un amas de tonnerres nasillards,'

retour au thème du violon avec l'image hardie de l'engouffrement dans une plainte qui aurait sans doute fait hurler le hardi Claudel (cf. 'le parfum des aubes déterrées', violemment reproché

à Loys Masson) et cette plongée dans une plainte équilibre l'escalade et le bond dans les rôles du début. L'amas de tonnerres nasillards est aussi une des obsessions de Michaux qui dans 'Liberté d'action' invente le tonnerre d'appartement, pour mettre en fuite les enfants bruyants (*La vie dans les plis*, Gall. 1949, p.19). Tonnerres *nasillards* bien entendu car tout se déforme plus ou moins dans la vision de Michaux et après tout les mauvais violons sont quelque peu nasillards.

De cette plongée dans les plaintes le poète va 'emporter par surprise' quoi donc?

'tout à coup de tels accents de panique ou de bébé blessé perçants, déchirants.'

Dans une image plurivalente on entend ou croit entendre les cris mêlés du violon, de l'écrivain et j'allais même dire de la girafe, si un coup de téléphone précautionneux au département de zoologie de l'université (qui ne connaissait pas les 'Notes de Zoologie' de Michaux dans *Mes propriétés*) ne m'avait appris que les girafes sont totalement muettes. Coup dur pour ma thèse du cri et pour ce que j'allais écrire: comme nous l'avions prévu, le cri remplace ici le chant dans un raccourci panique. Mais l'ironie est nécessaire même pour interpréter la poésie moderne. Le bébé est vraiment blessé, ce ne sont pas des cris ordinaires, la maman doit avoir enforcé par mégarde une épingle dans sa peau, va-t-il se dégonfler? Les accents du violon deviennent si insupportables

'que moi-même ensuite, je me retourne sur lui, inquiet, pris de remords, de désespoir.'

Par un retour sur sa propre plainte exprimée dans le violon le poète se fait antipoète puisqu'il objective sa plainte et tel Flaubert critiquant son propre romantisme, se demande s'il n'est pas allé trop loin. Plus que du remords, c'est du désespoir. L'écrivain Michaux se demande si le violon, ou l'écriture, est un moyen d'expression valable dans le genre plainte, si le cri vaut la peine d'être poussé et on sait que Michaux semble parfois plus à son aise dans le dessin et dans la fabrication graphique des monstres de son esprit. Il a illustré ses livres, fait de nombreuses expositions et c'est le seul surréaliste —se disant hors de toute école—qui ait réussi avec un égal bonheur dans l'écriture et le dessin. Plus inventif dans l'horreur et l'imprécis qu'un Salvador Dali, un Yves Tanguy, un Juan Miro' ou un Magritte, il se rattache à une très vieille tradition de son pays, la téralogie de Jérôme Bosch.

Il faudrait insister sur cette fin tragique du morceau :

'je me retourne sur lui, inquiet, pris de remords, de désespoir, et

de je ne sais quoi, qui nous unit, tragique, et nous sépare.'

On finit sur une note d'humilité, d'échec et de séparation dans le discontinu, à la fin de ce quelque chose qu'on pourrait appeler un sonnet surréaliste ou un poème 'pulvérisé' et 'crispé' pour employer les expressions de René Char, maître en raccourcis.

L'angoisse visible qui s'empare de Michaux a été cent fois décrite par lui : angoisse des métamorphoses, ici violon et girafe, ailleurs :

'A force de souffrir, je perdis les limites de mon corps et me démesurai irrésistiblement.

Je fus toutes choses : des fourmis surtout, interminablement . . . Je m'aperçus bientôt que non seulement j'étais les fourmis, mais aussi leur chemin.

. . . Une chute subite du terrain fit qu'une plage entra en moi, c'était une plage de galets; ça se mit à ruminer dans mon intérieur et ça appelait la mer, la mer.

Souvent je devenais boa . . . ETC. . . ' (Encore des Changements, in *Lointain Intérieur*, French-English ed. Routledge 1952, p.40).

On a dit de Michaux que c'était du Swift réécrit par Kafka dans le style sec de Voltaire. En effet il y a là du délire onirique et l'on sait que Michaux, poursuivant solitaire les recherches mises à la mode par le Surréalisme, s'adonna pour un temps à la mescaline. Je ne peux ici que renvoyer à l'ouvrage de Huxley : *The doors of perception*.

Enfin que faire devant certaines impasses que Boisdeffre a qualifiées assez injustement de cul-de-sac, sinon avoir recours à l'exorcisme, qui justifie certaines expériences, en mettant au jour les monstres et les démons à dépasser, et qui est le nom chrétien de l'antique catharsis? Il y a comme un lien subtil entre ces Ursulines de Loudun si bien expliquées par le même Huxley et la vocation bénédictine du jeune Michaux, repoussée à temps.

\* \* \*

Je termine. Bien entendu, selon la formule consacrée il faudrait maintenant étudier la langue et la grammaire de Michaux, mais ceci n'est qu'une introduction élémentaire à l'usage de débutants, un essai pédagogique, c'est pourquoi, comme point final à cette interprétation d'un texte qui fut l'occasion d'un exposé, j'introduirai un schème simplifiant, en me référant à 'l'étalement du surréalisme' dont parle Albérès avec maîtrise. Nadeau l'a suggéré. Michaux serait le Baudelaire du surréalisme. En poussant cette suggestion, nous pourrions dire que Breton en est le pape vieillissant. Ponge

## *L'Art Poétique après Valéry*

l'attentif Valéry, Eluard le Verlaine, Aragon le Hugo et Pichette le Rimbaud. On pourrait continuer ainsi mais je sais ce que valent ces rapprochements outrageants. Puissent-ils simplement éclairer la route et piquer la curiosité de quelque étudiant en mal de thèse !

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Nota: Je me suis limité volontairement à une liste de 25 volumes.

# AN ATTEMPT TO EXPLAIN THE TENDENCY TOWARDS THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE /œ̃/ PHONEME IN MODERN FRENCH

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IN MODERN TIMES the phonetic system of French appears to be in evolution in a certain number of particular instances. During the last hundred years, the disappearance of palatalized [l'] has become general and the substitution of uvular [R] for tongue-point [r] has developed considerably. At the present time, two phonemes seem to be endangered, namely /ɲ/ and /œ̃/. This study is an attempt to explain why the /œ̃/ phoneme has been and is losing ground in parts of the French-speaking area in Europe, and why this loss will sooner or later end in the disappearance of the phoneme, for which the neighbouring /ẽ/ phoneme is being substituted. Indeed statistical investigations do not quite bear out such a sweeping generalization. Regrettably, however, the basis of extant investigations<sup>1</sup> is too narrow. On the other hand, the theoretical examination of the case seems to prove that, failing an unlikely orthoepic counter-attack, the /œ̃/ phoneme is doomed to disappear.

The disappearance of /œ̃/ is in conformity with the law of general phonetics which says that the number of nasalized vowels always tends to decrease as their articulation opens. The problem is that of the operativeness of this law in the present state of the French sound-system. A solution will be sought in terms of, firstly, traditional phonology (historical phonetics) and secondly, phonemics (structural phonetics).

The usefulness of the structural approach should appear clearly from its application to a question which, although incidentally raising intricate problems of Old and Middle French diachronic phonology, is relatively simple. The second part of this study uses the structural method expounded by A. Martinet in his *Economie des Changements phonétiques* and remarks by the same author on the phoneme here considered<sup>2</sup>. I have attempted to give as complete a treatment of the subject as available information permits, and tentatively suggest that the extension of the concept of archi-phoneme to the nasalized pair /ẽ/œ̃/ is the most economical solution of the problem as it enables the nasalized vowels system to be explained in terms of the conditions existing in the oral vowels system and already known.

*Lexical frequency of /œ/ phoneme*

Casting about for a reasonable explanation of the disappearance of /œ/ phoneme in modern times, one immediately thinks of the very few words which present this phoneme in modern French and assumes that a particularly high rate of wastage from Old into Modern French for words comprising /œ/ might account for the slow disappearance of a phoneme which would recur less and less often. Let us then ascertain whether a lexical comparison would bear out such a hypothesis.

*List of Old French words containing /œ/ phoneme.* Hereunder are listed all O.F. words appearing in Godefroy's Dictionary, excluding words which still exist in Modern French with unchanged meaning(s); dubious words or forms of words; words in which, allowing of course for dialectal variation, a *un* spelling is either certain or most likely to stand for an /ɔ/ phoneme; place-names<sup>3</sup>, either used as such or as common nouns. A few rare or questionable words appear preceded by a dagger.

agun	aigrun	aubun	betun	†bungne	delun	desjeun
desrun	dun	†dund	enfrun	enjun	flum	frun
fum	fun	humbler	humblet	humbleté	letrun	leun
lum	lum	negun	nesun	†num	nun	†pluntier
(silt)	(light)			(pledge)		
prun	pun	rebruntier	renfrun	run	run	
				(place)	(ruin)	

*List of Modern French words containing /œ/ phoneme.* Hereunder are listed all M.F. words appearing in Littré, including compound-words or derivatives. Very rare words are shown by a dagger.

alun aucun brun chacun commun défunt †ébrun embrun  
 emprunt emprunter humble importun inopportun jeun (à)  
 lundi nerprun opportun parfum petun pétunsé quelqu'un  
 rèbelun tribun †tun un

For the sake of completeness, the following could be added: the people's name *Hun*, and the three foreign words: *dunlop* (dœnlɔp) (dœlɔp) (dœlɔp), *jungle* (jœgl) (jœgl) (jœgl), and *junte* (as in *jungle*).

In fact, Modern French has about a score of more or less usual words (20 without daggered words) containing the /œ/ phoneme. This is very few.

*Interpretation of the facts.* How should these facts be interpreted? We found in Old French thirty-four (34) words which almost certainly contained the /*ǣ*/ phoneme. To those should be added most Modern French words (20), (excluding known later words as *défunt*, *emprunt*, *emprunter*, *petun*), since they may have existed, and it is impossible to prove anything to the contrary, as Godefroy did not include in his O.F. dictionary words whose entries would have duplicated those in Littré. Thus Old French might have had a total of fifty-three such words, although one can rest fairly assured that no single dialect probably ever had them all. This means that a maximum of 62 per cent of these words have been lost from Old into Modern French, and almost certainly less since a number of them probably never existed at the one time (ex.: *delun & lundi*,—*negun, nesun & aucun*) (*défunt*, *emprûnter*, appear only in the XVth century). Nevertheless, a wastage of about 60 per cent would be greater than normally expected. Compared statistics of phoneme recurrence would, of course, be of greater value than dictionary statistics (making special counts for *un*, its compounds and all other words). This study has not seemed to be worth the labour, however, for the following reasons: the generalization of the use of *un* as the indefinite article in Modern French has certainly more than compensated for word-wastage in the gross count of /*ǣ*/ phonemes, and therefore the phoneme has not become rarer by the abnormal loss of phoneme-carrying words;—the specially high word-wastage rate is explained by the fact that, for reasons of historical phonetics, obsolete O.F. /*ǣ*/—words comprised an abnormally high percentage of monosyllables (15 out of 34, or 44 per cent) among which eleven susceptible of homophonic confusions (two [d*ǣ*], two [f*ǣ*], two [n*ǣ*], two [r*ǣ*], and three [l*ǣ*]. In these conditions, the high word-wastage rate agrees with the facts of French lexical history at large. The maximum theoretical functional yield of /*ǣ*/ was of 29.5 per cent for all words (<sup>1</sup>. A and B); of only 14.5 per cent if /*ǣ*/—words in homophonic clashes are excluded (<sup>1</sup>. B). Actual clashes, however, with /*ī*/ or /*ē*/ words would have been few. The functional yield does not seem to have saved any single /*ǣ*/—word from falling into disuse; it could not prevail against other stronger factors at work in the vocabulary (latinization, favouring of words belonging to a phonetically clear family-group and/or permitting derivation).

Since it is obviously not the presence of the /*ǣ*/ phoneme which has caused unusual losses among Old French words, it seems that the only conclusion that can be safely drawn from what has been said so far is that the small proportion of /*ǣ*/—words in M.F. in comparison with O.F. is nowise significant: normal wastage has

not been made up for by new acquisitions because of the lack of [œ] suffix, prefix or otherwise. Consequently, we see no difference between the state of affairs in M.F. and in O.F., which, on the contrary, share the same characteristic of presenting a proportionately extremely low figure of /œ/—words. The lexical frequency of /œ/ has always been low without for centuries bringing about the least sign of a tendency towards the disappearance of this phoneme. We are, therefore, faced again with the unchanged problem of explaining why, at the present time and in certain areas, /œ/ is being replaced by /ē/, in conformity with a law of general phonetics which somehow had remained inoperative for over six centuries. Is this inoperativeness of the law comparable to the prolonged inactivity of a volcano which one day comes to life again? Classical phonetics do not permit us to penetrate this mystery. So I shall try to see whether considerations of structure may enable us to understand why the phenomenon is taking place, and why now: in fact this is one and the same question.

#### STRUCTURAL INQUIRY

I shall examine the /œ/ phoneme in its relationship with other phonemes considered as forming a whole, presenting a certain structure. I shall assume that the /œ/ phoneme is part of a system of nasalized phonemes which in its turn is part of a system of vowel phonemes: if one element in the system is altered, part or whole of the system will be altered. No synchronic description can be entirely free from diachronic considerations since no sound-system is, properly speaking, motionless. The hypothesis that there exists a system which is an organic whole and not a classification of the botanical or zoological kind brings into the linguistic method the dimension of time; it adds to the admitted phonetic laws the notion of temporality, we might say the timeliness as regards their application, without which they remain incomprehensible. Phonemics, then, moving away from the positivism of traditional phonetics, make use of a dialectical method. Sound-systems do not change as the result of mechanical interactions only, the final result of which would be a state of equilibrium which has never been reached in any living language,—they change dialectically, and each synchronic exposition of a system bears the sign of an internal contradiction which will bring about a new system and yet a new one again. Such a method is the only scientific one which can attempt to explain why, for example, a particular change occurs at a particular time in a sound-system, whereas the mechanist method of traditional phonetics can do no more than record the changes with-

out explaining them. It may be suggested that we find here in the linguistic field an instance of the true materialist dialectical method, based on and called for by the facts—and it has nothing in common with the ideological, unscientific aberrations of part of Soviet linguistics up to 1947.

*An Historical Outline of the System of Nasalized Vowels*

The question of the system of nasalized vowels is an intricate one upon which experts are not in agreement. I shall follow the attractive schemes proposed by Haudricourt and Juilland for the IXth, Xth and XIth centuries<sup>5</sup>.

IXth century	in (1)	un (5)
	en (2)	on (4)
	an (3)	

The change of (u) to (ü) unbalances the system as follows:

Xth century	in (1)	ün (5)	on (4)
	en (2)	an (3)	

Whence the opening of *en* (2) which towards the XIth century merges (if we overlook dialectal variances) with *an* (3):

XIth century	in (1)	un (5)	on (4)
		an (2, 3)	

It is a similar tendency towards opening which is at work in the current merging of /*œ*/ with /*ê*/.\*

It should be remembered that full nasalization started with [ā] and was not completed until much later towards the XVth century when [ī] became fully nasalized. At first the second element of falling diphthongs *oin*, *ein*, *ain*, was probably very faintly, if at all, nasalized. The later monophthongization of these diphthongs developed, towards the XIIIth century, a new *en'*, apparently different from the Xth century *en* (2), but occupying a position near to the space left empty by the merging of *en* (2) with *an* (3) in the XIth century. This new *en'* probably merged with *en* (2) which had not been opened after a yod (ex.: *rien*, *bien*). Thus:

XIIIth century	in''	un''	on''
	en''	an''	

This system, which was unbalanced, will find a new state of equilibrium with the merging of *in''* and *en''*, during and after the

\* I refrain from using phonetic symbols in this historical outline as we do not know the exact phonetic value of spellings; moreover phonetic symbols could not represent the ceaseless shift that took place in most sounds.

XVIth century. The opening of in" thus is seen to have followed that of en (2), which appears to be quite logical. In turn, the opening of in" was prompted by the existence of the equally closed phoneme un". We then reach with the modern period the well-known system:

	un"	
in"		on"
	an"	

In this historical outline, I have of course simplified in order to bring out the main facts. Indeed, in many areas, *en* (2) and *an* (3) seem never to have completely merged until the XIVth or XVth century (as in Paris) as differences of length kept them separate, as is shown by the subsequent denasalization of *femme* and *flamme* [fam] and [flam]. It is nevertheless true that slowly but surely the change of [u] to [y] in the IXth century started a process of gradual opening of nasal phonemes, which was stepped up by the complete nasalization of the oral sounds followed by a nasal consonant in a closed syllable. More complete diagrams will show this more clearly.

	in				in ün
		un			on
A)	en		on	B)	en
	an				an

A) becomes B) when u becomes ü

Throughout the history of French (in the dialects which later gave rise to standard French), it seems that the opposition /ō/ ~ /ā/ has dominated the system of nasalized sounds. This opposition originated in the closing of /ō/ subsequent to the fronting of /ū/ to /ÿ/. After the XVth century, the now fully nasalized /ī/ opened towards /ē/ and finally merged with /jē/, which by then had been reinforced with /ě/ (from *ain*, *ein*, *oin*); the vacuum left by /ī/ allowed the progressive opening of /ÿ/ to /œ/, leading ultimately to the wider /œ/ of the regions where the confusion with /ē/ is prevalent, where /œ/ and /ē/ differ, when they do so, only in the presence or absence of rounding.

This, of course, is only a rough sketch of what happened. A kind of chain-reaction started—whose action was sometimes delayed as in the case of /ī/ until nasalization was complete, and which is still at work to-day. In fact, until the sounds were fully nasalized they behaved in exactly the same manner as their unmarked counterparts: thus the diphthongs *oin*, *ein*, *ain* followed the changes undergone by the oral diphthongs *oi*, *ei*, *ai*, until they were fully nasalized; full nasalization stopped *oin* at [wē] whereas

*oi* continued to develop from [we] to [wa]. But despite all complexities and uncertainties, the general trend towards gradual opening is the salient trait in the history of nasalized vowels. It appears that as soon as an oral vowel has become fully nasalized and has, after the disappearance of the nasalizing consonant, reached an independent phonematic status, it starts to open except in the two extreme cases of [ɔ̃] and [ã], between which precisely the constant phonetic alteration of the particular nasal vowel phonemes takes place. Although obscure in details, the general direction of the evolution is clear.

*The Modern System of Nasalized Phonemes.*

The modern system comprises four sounds which are undoubtedly independent phonemes in all except the southern varieties of French: /ã/—/ẽ/—/œ̃/—/õ/. They can be classified according to opening: /ã/ /ẽ/ /œ̃/ /õ/. But since the degree of opening varies greatly from /ẽ/ to /œ̃/ and to /õ/, it is preferable to adopt a classification based on the point of articulation and the presence or absence of rounding, thus:

/ã/	—	/õ/
/ẽ/	—	/œ̃/

in which each element differs from the other by at least two characteristics. This system seems to offer a great degree of stability. We shall see that in fact it is not so. The two opposite pairs /ã/ ~ /õ/ and /ẽ/ ~ /œ̃/ are unequally strong and the system tends at present towards a new three-phonematic state:

/ã/	/õ/
/ẽ/	

In fact, in Parisian French, one of the areas where [œ̃] becomes [ẽ], the two opposite pairs /ã/ ~ /õ/ and /ẽ/ ~ /œ̃/ differ in point of articulation whereas the phonemes in each pair are differentiated almost only by rounding and opening, as shown in the following table:

	not rounded	rounded
middle	/ẽ/	/œ̃/
velar	/ã/	/õ/
	more opened	less opened

Whereas, in Parisian French, the difference of opening between /ã/ and /õ/ is great, that between /ẽ/ and /œ̃/ is practically non-existent. This is due to the fact that both sounds have been opening to a somewhat intermediate position between [ã] and [ɔ̃]. On the other hand, it is also clear that the smaller the opening is,

the greater the rounding can be, and vice versa; for a great opening the rounding is practically nil. Consequently, the difference in rounding between [ā] and [ɔ̃] is much greater than it can be between [ē] and [œ̃]<sup>6</sup>. Thus it is that in Parisian French the difference between [ē] and [œ̃] can be no more than a nuance which is not even noticed by those people who do not make it in their own speech.

### Positional restriction of /œ̃/.

Whereas /ā/, /ō/, /ē/ appear in any position in a word, /œ̃/, with the only exception of *lundi* (also the denominative *emprunter* in which a pronunciation [œ̃] can be assigned to analogy, and the foreign written loan-word *pétunsé*) is limited to the last syllable, and in twenty out of twenty-five words, it is the ultimate phoneme. The opposition /ē/ ~ /œ̃/ is functionally productive in only three instances, all in the ultima, and even these words belong to different parts of speech: *brin*, a substantive, *brun*, an adjective.—*empreint*, a participle, *emprunt*, a substantive (it even seems that *emprunt* has, quasi-homophonetically, crowded out *empreint* which is restricted to elevated speech).—*hein*, an interjection, *un*, the indefinite article and numeral. Although we lack evidence as to whether some people pronounce [lēdi] but say [brœ̃] etc. . . ., we can admit that the opposition /ē/ ~ /œ̃/ is neutralizable elsewhere than in the last syllable, as is the case with the oral oppositions /e/ ~ /ɛ/ etc. . . ., and consequently belongs to one Archiphoneme /Ē/.

### The Nasal Correlation.

Although there are fewer nasalized phonemes than oral ones, the existing nasalized phonemes roughly correspond to oral phonemes, and at least to oral archiphonemes, thus: /A/—/ā/, /O/—/ō/, /E/—/ē/, /œ̃/—/œ̃/. However, in the last syllable before a final *n* or *m*, only the unmarked terms of the pairs are to be found. There is then an opposition: nasal/oral plus *n* or *m*. Many instances can be adduced for /ō/ ~ /on/, /ā/ ~ /an/, /ē/ ~ /en/, but none of /œ̃/ ~ /œ̃n/ (*à jeun* and *jeuner* are too far remote to be acceptable). On the other hand, there are gradations which are extra-phonological, such as /œ̃/ ~ /ün/, /ē/ ~ /in/ (*brun/brune*, *fin/fine*). The result is highly complex, and we have two groups of gradations, one (I) in which there is a phonological opposition, term-to-term, the other (II) in which the oppositions are either phonological or free:

I			II		
/ã/	~	/an/	/œ/	~	/in/
/õ/	~	/on/	/ẽ/	~	/en/
			~	~	/ün/

But gradations of type (II) do not stop the course of phonetic divergence even when they are used as morphological tools (ex.: *sire/seigneur* etc. . . .), although their lexical and/or grammatical existence can be felt by a speaker as long as the phonetic differentiation is not too great.

The only case in which /œ/~/œn/ still exists sporadically is when *un*, the article, is in sandhi. But this pronunciation has been losing ground (as well as the [yn] pronunciation of *un* masculine before a following vowel) and is being replaced by [œn] or [ẽn]. However, the gradation /õ/~/on/ is still very common in sandhi with the possessive adjectives.

The heterogeneity of the gradation /œ/~/ün/, if not a positive factor in the merging of /œ/ with /ẽ/, could not, at any rate, run against it.

#### *The case of the indefinite article—numeral “un”.*

Despite its great rarity in the dictionary, the occurrence of [œ] in speech is not as rare as might be expected, owing to the widespread use of the indefinite article—numeral *un*. Is it then legitimate, on the analogy of the /ð/ phoneme in English, which is upheld by the existence of the definite article *the*, although it is not quite so rare in the dictionary, to assume that *un* could suffice in preserving the /œ/ phoneme in French? Indeed it is certain that *un* has slowed down the process which we are studying. But two fundamental differences between *the* and *un* will show us that the similarity should not be over-emphasized. Firstly, *the* is itself bolstered up by the compact group of demonstrative words beginning with *th*—(*this, that, there, thus* . . .), whereas the *un*—compounds are few (*chacun, quelqu'un, aucun*,—Old French had two more: *negun* and *nesun*) and their etymological link is less apparent; secondly, /ð/ in English is opposed to /θ/ of which it is the voiced counterpart, and therefore belongs to the correlation of voicing which dominates the whole consonant system. We have seen, on the contrary, that the opposition /ẽ/~/œ/ is based on a weak opposition in rounding and grade of opening, and that even the particular positional restrictions of /œ/ entitle one to see in it a realization of the archi-phoneme /Ê/ in the last syllable and mainly as the ultimate phoneme in a word (mostly monosyllables). Whereas in the case of /ð/ the rest of the sound system tends to keep up an essential difference,

in the case of /œ/ the rest of the system seems to favour the neutralization of the opposition in all but a final position.

Used as a numeral, *un* often bears a strong stress, and the need of an intelligibility beyond doubt (cf. spelling pronunciations of other numerals such as 5,6,7,8,9) often brings a reinforced utterance. Now, closing takes away, but opening adds, clearness of utterance: hence [œ] would never become the nasalized [y] but might naturally be opened to [ê]. Indeed, since the only other numeral which comprizes a nasal phoneme is 11 (*onze*), nothing forbids a yet greater opening to [ā], and this last pronunciation, although displeasing to military orthoepists, is commonly encountered in the Armed Services, in the command: 'Un! Deux!' (pronounced [ā] [dœ]).

But mostly the proclitic character of the indefinite article gives to its phoneme the pretonic realization of the archiphoneme /Ê/, so that it will tend to assume a middle pronunciation, which is rather /ê/ than /œ/. It is quite understandable that the slight rounding which differentiates /œ/ from /ê/ becomes almost imperceptible when it is always unstressed.

Thus we see that, either stressed as a numeral or unstressed as the indefinite article, *un* tends to be pronounced /ê/, and therefore cannot hinder the tendency towards the disappearance of /œ/.

#### CONCLUSION

The evolution of the modern system of nasalized vowels, from the period when full nasalization really created a system of nasal vowel phonemes, has been dominated by the opposition /ā/ ~ /ō/. After the merging of /ī/ with /ê/, /œ/ has in its turn been opening towards a middle position at which it is distinguished from /ê/ by only a slight difference in rounding and opening, and this because of the physical asymmetry of the speech organs. Henceforth, the lexical rarity of the /œ/ phoneme and therefore its low phonemic productivity, its predominantly final position in words which in the light of the general system of French vowel phonemes allows it to be considered as a possible realization in a last syllable of words of the /Ê/ archiphoneme, are slowly bringing about the complete merging of [œ] with [ê] and the displacement of the rarer and phonetically more complex realization of the /Ê/ archiphoneme. The already existing heterogeneity of the oral gradations of /ê/ is thereby reinforced and contributes to further differentiate the nature of this phoneme, which is phonetically placed somewhat half-way between the two poles of attraction [ā] and [ō]. But this last character, which is no more than a residuum from a period when nasalized vowels were not yet phonemes, is definitely unimportant.

The new three-phoneme nasal-vowel system seems to have become simple and stable as it has reached complete phonematic status and independence from the oral vowel system.

# NOTES

<sup>1</sup> A. Martinet, *La prononciation du français contemporain*, Introduction.

<sup>2</sup> A. Martinet, *ibid.*, pp.147-150; *Phonology as Functional Phonetics*, p.22; *Diffusion of Language and Structural Linguistics*, in *Romance Philology*, VI, pp.8 & 9; *Function, Structure & Sound Change*, in *Word* 8, p.10; *Economie des changements phonétiques*, *Traité de phonologie diachronique*, 4.32 and 6.30, Berne, 1955.

<sup>3</sup> Place-names ending in -un and -dun are numerous. But the survival of such nouns has nothing in common with that of common nouns, and furthermore what we know of the spelling pronunciation of proper names makes them devoid of importance where modern usage is concerned.

<sup>4</sup>	A	B
	derrain	dain
	enfreint	feint (verb)
	(verb)	fin, feinet,
	engin	faim
	flain, flin	lin
	prin, preins	nain
	pain, pin	rain, rein, rin, rin

<sup>5</sup> Haudricourt & Juilland, *Essai pour une histoire structurale du phonétisme français*, Paris 1949.

<sup>6</sup> See: A. Martinet, *Equilibre et Instabilité des systèmes phonologiques*, Proceedings of the International Congress of Phonetic Sciences, III, p.33.

## BOOK REVIEWS

TACITUS. Ronald Syme. *Oxford University Press.*

EVERYONE was agreed that Ronald Syme had the capacity to produce a major work on the Roman oligarchy, from Tiberian to Hadrianic times, continuing the method and treatment of his earlier volume, 'The Roman Revolution' (Oxford, 1939). He has done so, under the title 'Tacitus'. Numerous precursory studies have kept appearing in recent years: Annals I-VI have been scrutinised for personal names; here a cluster of Pisones, there missing senators have been found, consulates in absence detected, friendships with Tacitus impugned, implied or impaired. Now two large volumes, nine hundred pages, ninety-five appendixes and a select bibliography attest the Camden Professor's capacious erudition and set the seal of authority on this imperial theme.

Among the subjects (vid. p.809) of the work Tacitus takes pride of place, even if often merely *primus inter pares*. Other figures and groups, both literary and political, emerge: Pliny, who is important for dating purposes (Suetonius, being neither a consular nor a senator nor a historian is sagaciously repressed), Sallust, Agricola, L. Vitellius (cos III 47), Trajan's marshals, Julius Servianus, Licinius Sura, Hadrian's henchmen. Tacitus is, above all, the consular historian (consul suffectus, 97 A.D., pro-consul in Asia 112 A.D.), pathologically conscious of the anachronism of senatorial prerogative after a century and a half of the 'Restored Republic' (and the recurring restoration of 'libertas'), deeply observant of the realities and processes of power under rulers mostly bad, a member of the oligarchy, devastatingly and ferociously accurate in his documentary study of that oligarchy at work. New men or scions of proven stock, men from Italy, Narbonese Gaul, Spain, the East, the affluent, the ambitious, the intelligent, all work their way upwards under the protection of a pervading system of patronage to their individual terminus. Thence, losing favour, they might be swept down, some, as Sejanus, with a mighty fall.

The fascination of this work lies in the undaunted firmness with which the background and context of the consular historian is sketched. To another the materials might seem inadequate, the aids to erudition fragile or unreliable; to Professor Syme his own efficient card-index system is a pliant tool, and from this prosopographical labyrinth of such exciting complexity we emerge, thread in hand, to find, for example, Domitian's guilty men firmly entrenched under Trajan; Hadrian's friends, as Tiberius' a century before them, taking over in the last years of their leader's imperial predecessor. The method is decisive. Was Sejanus struck down just in time? No other senator of consular standing, except Junius Blaesus, an uncle, appears to have suffered (p.406). There was no lack of victims, but they were lesser men who did not count. They were necessary for Tiberius' conspiracy.

Turning to Tacitus' writings Syme again has much to say that is salutary. Why perpetuate the myth that Roman historians were incapable of making an independent analysis of primary sources? Does the Tacitean Tiberius derive from Aufidius Bassus or Servilius Nonianus or someone unknown? An impossible question as we have almost nothing of any of them. There need be no regrets at discarding this kind of enquiry. Abundant indications prove that the consular historian searched the *acta senatus* (p.278f) and exercised his own formidable critical judgment upon them. Tacitus can sometimes fail to reach his own declared standards of dispassionate inquiry, and here Syme exhibits an uncharacteristic partiality for his client and

writes at generous length in palliation and defence. Much has to be blamed on the tradition of Roman historical writing, for example lack of topographical precision, but doubts arise as to why the geography of Germany and Britain should be thought so lacking in comprehensible features or interest (p.393f). The test case is Tacitus' portrayal of Tiberius. Here Syme provokes thought but not conviction. Tacitus, he says, (p.430) might have produced a wholly acceptable Tiberius had not convention and tradition proved too strong for this sceptical inquirer into the documents (cf. the enigmatic remark, p.430, n.1). It seems inadequate recompense to the memory of Tiberius, successfully damned through a whole hexad of Tacitus, to find that the material for his defence existed already, concealed between the lines by an oligarch's malice.

In another department Syme excels. To apportion the matter of the Histories and Annals, book by book, between 30 of them, of which just over half survive, requires the confidence and imagination of a master. Syme's grouping of books into hexads (3 for the Annals, 2 for the Histories) is plausible, and at the same time invites a number of attractive structural arguments based on repetitions and pattern, e.g.: Gaul, Jews, Christians. Such thematic treatment combined within a modified annalistic framework bears the mark of a master of historical craftsmanship (Tacitus, if not also Syme). Syme's skill as a fragmentologist is surpassed only by his adeptness at prosopography, twin sciences springing from a common need and requiring a similar manipulation. Similar is the author's treatment of Tacitus' style. Families of words, in which Sallust's right of primogeniture is often patent, are traced; the thematic use or suppression of such concepts as 'auctoritas', 'potentia', 'pietas', 'providentia' etc. provide a scathing commentary on the ideology of the early Empire.

Lastly, one must mention Syme's style. He is a difficult author to read. His narrative style is unrelaxed and ponderous with abstract nouns, rare All Souls' words, effective and astonishing. Add to this, pages pitilessly crammed with a kaleidoscope of names, of persons, offices, places, and Tacitean brevity and occasional obscurity (e.g. p.50 n.1), and one has an exposition of unrivalled strength and tautness which over a large period reveals in the profoundest sense the greatness and complexity of history.

The superfetation of appendixes apart, these volumes are of the usual high standard of the Clarendon Press. Errors are small (p.250, l.22; 6.426, note 10 missing). The punctuation is sometimes disconcerting, but from design; the diligent reader learns to expect the unexpected. It is inadequate to have only a short list of abbreviations located at the end of Volume Two. The work, indeed, is not so barren of defects that it allows no room for improvement, but it is a major work of classical scholarship in which we may take some pride, and the fact of its appearance in the same year as E. Badian's *Foreign Clientelae*, both from the Clarendon Press, indicates the strength of classical scholars trained in the Antipodes.

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APOLLONIUS OF RHODES. THE VOYAGE OF ARGO. A new translation by E. V. Rieu. *The Penguin Classics*, London, 1959, pp.207.

THIS new translation of the *Argonautica* is welcome on at least two counts: it brings Greekless readers a racy and readable version of one of the best adventure stories of antiquity, and it provides a useful aid to Classical students wrestling with the difficulties of Apollonius's Greek. Dr Rieu has

clearly had the first category of readers mainly in mind, as in his translations of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, but critics who found the latter unnecessarily informal and undignified will not have so much to find fault with in this one. The idiom of the English is modern without being colloquial, and it represents the meaning of the Greek faithfully without allowing itself to be coerced by the syntax. Apollonius is, however, an easier task for the translator than Homer. Homer is a great poet, and his essentially oral epic has no counterpart in modern literature. Apollonius is a lesser poet, and therefore more amenable to translation, and his epic is a literary *tour de force*, which is something that we can quite well appreciate. There is indeed a kind of counterpart to the *Argonautica* in the prose epic of *The Long Ships* by Frans G. Bengtson, the style of which is not a bad model for translators of ancient heroic poetry.

The beginning of the story, with its catalogue of heroes, and the end, with its fantastic landfalls on the homeward journey, are not well designed, but that is the fault of Apollonius: the Alexandrians were more interested in episodic detail than in the overall pattern of a work. But from 'Everything was ready' on p.42 the story runs fluently, and is at its best in the more exciting moments, such as the launching of Argo (pp.45-6), the boxing-match (pp.74-5), and the passage between the colliding Rocks (pp.88-9). And the whole adventure at Colchis from the romantic palace of Aeetes to the end of Book III is excellent story-telling.

There is a marked feeling for rhythm in Dr Rieu's prose, which is especially noticeable in formal passages, such as the opening sentence of the first book, where the line 'between the Cyanean rocks in quest of the Golden Fleece' recalls the dactylic pentameter. A more varied rhythm appears in the simile 'as bees come pouring out from their rocky hive when the meadows are gay with dew' (p.60). On the whole the sentences tend to be short and produce an abruptness which is not in the Greek, but here and there we come across a longer rhythmical period in which the phrasing is beautifully turned, e.g. 'But at that time of day when heavenly light has not yet come, nor is there utter darkness, but the faint glimmer that we call twilight spreads over the night and wakes us, they ran into the harbour of the lonely isle of Thynias and went ashore exhausted by their labours.' (p.91).

The temptation to display modernity by means of colloquial touches has been resisted here more than in most of the Penguin translations, and it may be that a reaction is now setting in against the horrors of some American versions of the Classics. But occasional lapses meet the eye. There is an awkwardness about 'you can raise a tremendous racket by banging on your shields' (p.102), or 'I was cut to the quick, but I am not going to nurse a grudge' (p.72), though judgment on such matters is bound to be subjective. For the language of prayers the translator is undecided whether to use 'thou' or 'you' in addressing a deity, since both occur. But there is very little that reads like a translation, and Dr Rieu passes this crucial test with distinction. To achieve this, however, he has allowed himself considerable freedom in many of his renderings, often, I think, without need or justification. In translating a well-known author, of whom various versions are already available, this mannerism is reasonable, and may even be rather entertaining, as I think it is in De Selincourt's Herodotus. But Apollonius is little known, his Greek is difficult, and there is no other translation available in English, apart from the expensive Loeb. It would therefore seem to be the translator's duty to keep close to what the Greek actually says. On p.136 'Jason's homage melted Medea' will puzzle the reader who is following the Greek text of Book III, until he realises that the sentence combines

'Thus he spoke complimenting her' at the beginning of line 1008 and 'her heart melted within her' at the end of the next line. On p.160 the rendering 'they did not need his help and were already wondering whether he needed theirs' makes a neat epigram, but it is an opportunity that has been missed by Apollonius, who ends simply with 'they were already thinking about him'. Similarly on p.161 'deciding that Colchis was no place for them' must be a translator's gloss, for there is nothing corresponding to it in the Greek text.

On the other hand there are many renderings of the Greek that are pleasingly apt. The choice of adjective is good in 'gallant ship' (p.46), of noun in 'watery wake' (p.51), and the attribute 'god of happy landings' (p.62) for 'Ekbasios' is witty, though it would not bear repetition. On p.120 the word-order of the Greek is successfully retained by altering the syntax in 'It is morning when I yoke my team and by evening I have done my harvesting', a nice example of a very useful technique in the translation of the Classical languages. The importance of their word-order is too often disregarded by translators, but in fact Greek and Latin have a flexibility here which they exploit to the full. The words are placed in the most telling sequence, and it is a mistake to miss the effect of this by translating the syntax instead of the sense.

This translation is prefaced by a scholarly and informative introduction, which includes some useful comment on particular passages in the text. For example Dr. Rieu points out (p.25) a mistake of previous translators in making the Great Bear 'set', at III,1196, where the verb in fact means 'declined'. He is undoubtedly right. But he does not go on to explain the point of this word in the context: it is, I think, a literary convention that regards the Great Bear as the hand of a nocturnal clock circling round the pole and reaching its highest altitude at midnight. So when the poet says that 'Jason waited for the bright constellation of the Bear to decline' (p.141), he means that the hero waited till after midnight.

The glossary of names at the end of the book should prove helpful; but a most useful amenity would have been a map, on which at least the identifiable places might have been shown, to assist the non-Classical reader—and even the Classicist—to negotiate the course of the Argo to Colchis and back.

*University of Canterbury*

D. A. KIDD

ROMAN ATTITUDES TO EDUCATION. D. A. Kidd (Christchurch Classical Association, 1958).

SINCE the publication of Professor H. I. Marrou's monumental 'Histoire de l'Education dans l'Antiquité' and especially since its translation into English, a great deal of interest has been generated in Greek and Roman education. Unfortunately for those interested, it is not easy to get a coherent picture of this education from the original sources. Quintilian is the most comprehensive writer on the topic, and his work is long, often tedious, and not a historical sketch. Professor Kidd is to be commended for compressing into the space of one lecture a survey of the whole field—an excellent introduction for newcomers to the study.

'What I propose to discuss in this lecture is the changing outlook on education during the Roman Republic and early Empire. It is to a large extent the story of the impact of Greek ideas on Rome, the different re-

actions to these, and the successes and failures which attended the educational system that arose out of them.' Professor Kidd sketches the essentials of the native Roman education before the impact of Greece; the devotion to home and family, to the *mos maiorum*, the authority of the father, the military service, the mainly moral orientation of the system. Moral qualities and a few physical and political skills were the chief goals of pre-Greek Roman education. A picture of Greek education, somewhat over-simplified, is then put before us, followed by a description of Rome's twofold reaction to Greek education when the two traditions met. The majority of Romans 'capitulated to Greece, and the demand for a Greek education spread rapidly'. On the other hand Cato led to this foreign influence a vigorous opposition which in 161 B.C. produced strictures against foreign teachers and in 92 B.C. against the Latin schools of rhetoric.

After this picture of the conflict and an excellent brief account of the reasons for Rome's general adoption of Greek education, Professor Kidd (taking Cicero as an example) sketches the system of education from primary school to tertiary level in the first century B.C. The extraordinary success of this system is well suggested; next, the 'sea change' which Roman education suffered in the succeeding century; the usual quotation from the beginning of the 'Satyricon', followed by a masterly summary of Quintilian's educational thought in under two pages, and the lecture closes with four sentences hinting at lessons we moderns might learn from the experience of the ancients.

In under twenty pages of text the author has covered three and a half centuries of development involving two fundamental cultural changes. This is necessary in a survey lecture of this kind; but the inevitable price is a certain shallowness of treatment and a degree of over-simplification. 'The intellectual side' (of Greek education) 'comprised the reading and interpreting of the poets (epic, lyric and dramatic), the writers of prose (historians, orators and philosophers), music, dancing and mathematics, which included astronomy.' This is misleading. At the time when music, dancing and gymnastics really formed the basis of Greek education, the orators and philosophers (at any rate of the classical canons) were hardly born; at the time when the study of prose formed an important part of education, the education had become primarily literary.<sup>1</sup> For all the pious hopes embodied in the ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία mathematics and literary education seldom went together.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps more serious is Professor Kidd's adoption of what some consider an outdated view of Roman education from the first century A.D. onwards. 'The successors of Augustus had even the law courts subservient to them. There was little incentive to honest public debate when the spirit of the age called for the servile oration, or silence. Nevertheless the schools went blindly on with the declamations.' There is another view than the picture here conveyed, as Parks has demonstrated;<sup>3</sup> and on our estimate of the situation in this period rests our whole evaluation of Roman education after Cicero's death.

Other details could be called in question. Is it fair to use a few pages of the *Satyricon* as a serious commentary on education? Is it sound to quote Quintilian's lip-service to Greek as an analogy for our modern defence of Latin—seeing that Quintilian's intimacy with Greek is open to suspicion?<sup>4</sup> And Quintilian's own system of education would probably be far from producing the ideal orator whom he sketches in his preface (quoted by Professor Kidd, p.25).

There are some Roman attitudes which Professor Kidd, in a single lecture,

had no time to touch; it is a pity because they shed light on the fundamentals of education. When so individual a nation as the Romans adopted a foreign education, what did they give it of their own? There must have been something; but it is elusive. Why did so intensely practical a nation, which built great structures all over Europe, not elevate their technological studies further? Why did these men who so valued education leave it so largely in the hands of freedmen and slaves? What was the Roman attitude that made of rhetoric—an essentially utilitarian study in the Republic—a noble spiritual and mental formation whose prestige sustained it as its utility decreased? Did they discern the value of rhetoric as a civilizing medium, binding their farflung empire? The answers to such riddles will only be found by such men as Professor Kidd, who know the Romans well. We hope that this brief but illuminating essay may be the prelude to further interpretations in this subject.

University of Melbourne

R. JOHNSON

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> On this whole question see H.-I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity* tr. G. R. Lamb (London, Sheed and Ward, 1956), part II ch. IV.

<sup>2</sup> Marrou, *op.cit.* part II ch. VIII.

<sup>3</sup> E. P. Parks, 'The Roman Rhetorical Schools as a Preparation for the Courts under the Early Empire', *Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Practical Science*, 62, 2 (Baltimore, 1945).

<sup>4</sup> A. Gwynn, *Roman Education from Cicero to Quintilian* (Oxford 1926) pp.226-230.

STRANGE SEAS OF THOUGHT: STUDIES IN WILLIAM WORDSWORTH'S PHILOSOPHY OF MAN AND NATURE. N. P. Stallknecht. *Indiana University Press*, 1958, pp. xi, 290.

*Strange Seas of Thought* was first published by the Duke University Press in 1945; the new edition is in fact a re-issue, with an added appendix on the possible influence of Roman stoicism.

It deals with the philosophic background of Wordsworth's ideas only insofar as it undertakes to identify the philosophers whose writings may have influenced Wordsworth when he came to explain the nature of his peculiar experiences and his inductions from them. As Professor Stallknecht admits, he is analyzing only 'the medium in terms of which intuitive insights (were) given an embodiment or the context in terms of which these (were), so to speak, published'. It is largely, therefore, an enquiry into the sources of Wordsworth's philosophical vocabulary rather than one into the sources of his philosophy.

Such a limitation of the field of enquiry was perhaps inevitable, however hampering the reader and the author may find it at times; it does make the study a very peripheral one, and may also be responsible for making it a rather dull and confusing one. The case remains unproven. The echoes which Professor Stallknecht detects in Wordsworth of Boehme's contorted prose, or of Kant, Schiller, Spinoza, and even Hartley, may be there indeed, but in most cases it would take an acutely trained ear to detect them. One

might indeed try harder if there were any reason to assume that Wordsworth in fact read any of them, apart from Hartley. His letters, after all, are almost innocent of references to 'serious reading' of any kind, let alone of Professor Stallknecht's kind. By 1840 he was frankly brazen about it, writing to Robinson that he had 'never read a word of German metaphysics, thank Heaven!' However, Coleridge's friend would hardly have needed to be himself a reader, Professor Stallknecht assures us, though the lines of communication he thereby suggests begin to look dangerously attenuated for his particular purpose.

One may ask why the author presses his dubious case so hard, even in the face of such signal lack of co-operation on the part of the poet. The answer is to be found in his first chapter. There, after admitting that 'there is no Wordsworthian system of ethics or of metaphysics', and that a conviction of the truth or defensibility of Wordsworth's fundamental ideas may not be necessary to an enjoyment of his poetry, he goes on to maintain that such a conviction *is* necessary if Wordsworth is to be defended 'against a hostile critic'; which is a somewhat lame and surprising reason whose wider invocation could lead to all sorts of critical absurdities. I suspect however that a conviction of the sort he mentions, a conviction that Wordsworth's ideas can at least be shown to have a respectable parentage, is felt to be necessary for a Wordsworthian who is also, as Professor Stallknecht is, a philosopher.

But because Wordsworth himself was not a philosopher, it should not dismay his readers that when he tried to make 'fundamental ideas' out of the facts of his experience he should have come occasionally to dialectic as well as poetic grief. Reading Boehme, Spinoza, etc., would not have made a philosopher out of him; nor would hearing Coleridge talk of Boehme, Spinoza, etc.; not a philosopher in Matthew Arnold's sense, nor even in Mr Aldous Huxley's sense. Coleridge's praise of his poetry, I believe, certainly did have an effect; its terms may have been fatal. The friend who thought that the author of 'The Ruined Cottage' and 'Tintern Abbey' still needed to give what another philosopher, Professor Stallknecht, calls 'adequate expression' to his intuitions, was dangerous company indeed.

Coleridge never got his great philosophical poem, 'thank Heaven'; and Professor Stallknecht's 'hostile critic' will hardly be silenced by this defence. The defender too often seems to be chasing shadows, listening for faint echoes, hinting at possibilities, elaborating hypotheses of the way in which Wordsworth may have been influenced by Hartley as transcendentalized by Coleridge on the basis of Boehme. After quoting a passage from Book 8 of *The Prelude*, the author comments: 'It is interesting to notice that in this passage . . . Wordsworth combines a panpsychist sense of unity with a suggestion of Eolian inspiration.' I think it is fair to say that if you *do* find this interesting to notice, you will find *Strange Seas of Thought* interesting; and contrariwise.

University of Tasmania

F. M. TODD

EVERY MAN A PHOENIX: *Studies in seventeenth-century autobiography*. Margaret Bottrall. London, John Murray, 1959, pp.174.

MRS BOTTRALL has set out 'to examine some early and varied specimens of English autobiography and to suggest reasons why the climate of the seventeenth century was favourable to this form of self-expression' (p.6). Her

interest is unequally divided. Five of the six studies which make up the book are given to individual authors; one to the climate of the century.

In her first chapter Mrs Bottrall states her belief that autobiography is only likely to flourish at a time when it is generally assumed that the study of individual psychology is natural and valuable. In England, autobiography was virtually established as a literary form during the early years of the seventeenth century, and she gives ample proof that there existed throughout this period an interest in individual psychology more meditative and enquiring than ever before.

The chapter is a crowded one, and the author tends to spend more time discussing unimportant aspects of an introspective writer than she does on the conditions which gave rise to the introspective attitude. There is a certain lack of proportion in a study in which seventeen lines are spent on Felltham's piety (because it resembles Sir Thomas Browne's), and only five on the influence of protestantism and humanism.

The authors treated separately have been chosen to illustrate the various types of autobiography written during the period. Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici* ['a beautiful example of the inward-looking, ruminative essay in self-exploration'] and John Bunyan's spiritual chronicle *Grace Abounding* are contrasted with the more extrovert autobiographies of Lady Halkett and Lord Herbert of Cherbury. Richard Baxter is included because he combines the self-analytical with the historical approach.

For Mrs Bottrall, 'the appreciation of an autobiography should be based upon the concept of the man and the mask, the private and the public face; for if, in daily life, the give-away gesture and the characteristic evasion are clues by which we recognise the psychic duality of our fellows, they are even more significant in a man's considered account of his own life' (p.57). Wisely she does not attempt to make too much of the 'psychic duality' of her authors. A comparison of their self-portraits with the biographical information which she has assembled reveals no serious discrepancies, except in the case of Lord Herbert of Cherbury whose boastful *Autobiography* may have been written, as she cogently suggests, to disguise an inner sense of failure.

Each of the studies becomes an exploration of personality; the biography of an autobiographer. Consequently Mrs Bottrall is at her best as she examines the spiritual chronicles of Browne, Bunyan, or Baxter and reveals the many facets of a complex personality. Her comments on the more factual memoirs are less valuable, her recourse to lively anecdote more frequent. At times her sympathy melts into motherliness ['poor ignorant unstable Bunyan'], but she sees each author against the climate of the century and her judgements are usually steady. Perhaps the most pleasing feature of the studies is the use of extended quotation; the passages are usually put to work, but more important still are sufficiently numerous to convey the flavour of the book under consideration.

Mrs Bottrall is aware that to write an autobiography demands more than candour, integrity, or psychological penetration. 'Even the straightforward chronicle of an active life involves the constant exercise of judgement . . . the truly relevant facts must be selected and arranged in a coherent and significant pattern' (p.7). But it is here that her book is weakest. As Basil Willey has shown in his study of Sir Thomas Browne (*The Seventeenth Century Background*, pp.43-48), language itself can reveal personality, but Mrs Bottrall pays little attention to the language of the autobiographies or to their structure and organisation. She convinces us that each of her autobiographers has a unique experience to convey, an experience which enriches

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our knowledge of human nature. She leaves unanswered important questions about the manner in which that experience is communicated.

The book is provided with a selected bibliography and an index of names.

University of Otago

C. A. GIBSON

ANDREW MARVELL. John Press. *Writers and Their Work: No. 98.* Longmans, Green, 1958, pp.42.

THIS is a good introductory essay to Marvell. The biographical information is up-to-date, recent trends in criticism are noted, and there is a bibliography with useful comments. The presentation of material is admirably lucid.

It is therefore unfortunate that in this series of publications there are no footnote references. It would be difficult for readers to discover, for instance, more about recent work on Marvell's possible collaboration with 'a Dutch fifth-column', since there is no reference to the source (which is K. H. D. Haley: *William of Orange and the English opposition 1672-4*. Oxford, 1953.)

Similarly lack of references makes it difficult to check Mr Press' statements, though I note the following doubtful points:

p.7 The quotation from Scudamore is not accurate.

p.8 Peter du (not *de*) Moulin.

p.9 At least one of Marvell's quarrels 'that ended in blows' was described by him as a playful scuffle, and can hardly be used to prove he was 'a fierce hater.'

p.12 *The Mock Speech from the Throne* has not been proved to be by Marvell.

p.15 What evidence is there that Marvell was in particular influenced by Cleveland?

p.15 What evidence is there that 'all through his life he retained his admiration for . . . Donne'?

p.22 Although the date of *Fleckno* is unknown, it is most probably an early poem, as the incidents related in it belong to 1645 or 1646.

In his critical section Mr Press expands his initial statement that 'Marvell's poetry displays and fuses into a harmonious whole a rich Metaphysical subtlety, a moral seriousness and a sensuous lyricism, part of its fascination residing in the ordered interplay of these varied elements'. This is the modern view of Marvell's achievement and Mr Press expounds it well if rather briefly—one and a half pages for 'moral seriousness' for instance. In fact it is probably lack of space which leads Mr Press too often into such generalisations as: 'Moreover, his concern for social order, his feeling for the unspoiled life of the countryside, and his admiration for the values fostered by great country houses rooted in local tradition give his poetry a fine, mature dignity.' One objects to this generalisation, not because it is reminiscent of old-fashioned literary criticism, but because it could be applied to dozens of poets. Moreover, such phrases as 'concern for social order' are bound to remain vague gestures of approval unless illustrated by quotations.

I may perhaps add here information of interest to students of Marvell which was probably not known to Mr Press. B. J. Manton's thesis (1954) on *Andrew Marvell in 1672*, which is a detailed study of *The Rehearsal Transpos'd Part I* is available at Otago University Library. D. I. B. Smith, a graduate of Auckland University, is preparing a critical edition of *The*

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*Rehearsal Transpros'd* at Oxford University. The Clarendon Press informs me that a revised version of Pierre Legouis' *Marvell* will shortly be published in an English translation. Thirty-odd years is a long time to wait for a translation of the finest book yet written on Marvell: perhaps someone at Oxford is trying to encourage students of English literature to learn French.

University of New England

DENNIS DAVISON

AGAINST NATURE. J.-K. Huysmans. A new translation of 'A REBOURS' by Robert Baldick, *Penguin Books* 1959.

ROBERT BALDICK'S translation is perfect in the sense that it does not read like a translation. Nothing essential has been altered in the original, and yet everywhere we find the translator's own idiomatic phrases, which unobtrusively permeate the whole. This is not meant as an adverse criticism: it only characterizes any modern translation. Instead of a mixture of two styles we have only one, the translator's, but so carefully trimmed that at first sight the difference is hardly noticeable. Everything is the same, and yet nothing has been left unaltered.

Let us take the second paragraph of the 'Prologue': 'Ceux-là étaient les ancêtres; les portraits de leurs descendants manquaient; un trou existait dans la filière des visages de cette race; une seule toile servait d'intermédiaire, mettait un point de suture entre le passé et le présent, une tête mystérieuse et rusée, aux traits morts et tirés, . . . '—'These were the founders of the family; the portraits of their descendants were missing. There was, in fact, a gap in the pictorial pedigree, with only one canvas to bridge it, only one face to join past and present. It was a strange, sly face, with pale drawn features; . . . '

If I had to comment on Baldick's style independently of any French original I should say that it was very rhythmical, consisting of almost equal breath groups, with frequent use of alliteration and assonance. We cannot help noticing that 'founders of the family' (for 'ancêtres') and 'pictorial pedigree' are chosen with regard to the sound effect. The sequence: 'strange, sly face, with pale, drawn features' not only alliterates 'strange' and 'sly', 'face' and 'features', but also repeats the long 'a' in 'strange', 'face', 'pale'. 'In fact', which has been added as a link between the two sentences, also forms an assonance with 'a gap', just as 'only one face' . . . is a pendant to 'only one canvas . . . ' Of all these niceties there is no trace in the original.

Another means of re-moulding the text is by introducing new conjunctions and adverbs. Thus all independent statements become interrelated, all transitions smoothed.

If again we take our examples from the first page we find:

'La décadence de cette ancienne maison avait, sans nul doute, suivi régulièrement son cours; l'effémination des mâles était allée en s'accroissant; comme pour achever l'œuvre des âges, les des Esseintes marièrent, pendant deux siècles, leurs enfants entre eux, usant leur reste de vigueur dans les unions consanguines.'

Translation page 17:

'Since then the degeneration of this ancient house had clearly followed a regular course, with the men becoming progressively less manly; and over the last hundred years, as if to complete the ruinous process, the Des

Esseintes had taken to intermarrying among themselves, *thus* using up what little vigour they had left.'

Baldick also takes great pains to explain any image or reference that may put too much strain on the reader's imagination: Huysmans refers to the 'hameau vert et noir de Longueville' which has to be paraphrased as 'the hamlet of Longueville *with its green and black houses*'. The original speaks of 'un désert confortable', which becomes 'a desert hermitage *equipped with all modern conveniences*'.

There is hardly a sentence where Baldick did not feel obliged to amplify or paraphrase: 'qui s'absorbent à l'écart du monde.'—'who spend their lives in quiet contemplation apart from human society'. (Page 212)

'Il était d'ailleurs temps de se résoudre;'—'Besides, there was another reason why he should lose no time in coming to a decision.' (Page 24)

'... acheta des rentes sur l'Etat.'—'. . . and *with the money he obtained* bought sufficient government stocks' (Page 24). Page 5: 'Il lisait ou rêvait,'—'He would spend hours reading or daydreaming,' (Page 19).

All this makes us wonder whether French really is a so much terser language than English. Is not Huysmans' novel so highly sophisticated that in his own day the author could not hope to appeal to any but the most educated? Is not the literary arrogance of the style part and parcel of Des Esseintes' snobbery?

It is quite obvious that a Penguin classic is meant to reach a much wider public than the one for which Huysmans wrote in the first place. If we condone the translator's efforts in pleasing the average reader we must give him full credit for the skill and apparent ease with which he has adapted Huysmans' style to his new purpose. Baldick never evades any difficulty, nor can he bear any obscurity or ambiguity. What in the original is only vaguely hinted at is now clearly stated. In comparing the two texts one is struck by how much Huysmans has left unsaid. Most paragraphs, in English, seem to need a short introductory phrase, such as: '*When he came to his senses again*, he found that he was *utterly alone, completely disillusioned* . . .' (Page 10) In the original the paragraph begins simply: 'Il se retrouva sur le chemin, dégrisé, seul, . . .'. All these comparisons point to the aristocratic word economy of the French author as compared to the rather vulgar loquacity of the translator.

The latter not only takes pains to make the book as readable as possible by modern standards; he also endeavours to make it more sensational, more interesting. Again this is not Mr Baldick's individual approach; all modern translators have to try and stir the modern reader's blunted perceptions by better and stronger ingredients. Baldick embellishes a good deal. We can feel the difference in style even more clearly when we read the translation first.

Page 23: '... his hands were shaking: he could keep them steady enough when he was gripping a heavy object, but they trembled uncontrollably when holding something light such as a wineglass.' We notice the colloquial ease with which the story is told. There is nothing that might suggest that this is not an original piece of writing. The original is much heavier, carved, as it were, in a different material: '... la main remuait, droite encore lorsqu'elle saisissait un objet lourd, capricante et penchée quand elle tenait quelque chose de léger tel qu'un petit verre.'

In all these instances a literal translation would not have sounded as up-to-date as Baldick's translation. And this is really the point to make: Baldick does not only translate from one language into another, but also from one century into another. If we include this task in a translator's

duties he has succeeded admirably. There is hardly a phrase that does not receive its most up-to-date rendering, e.g.: 'se singulariser' . . . —'to advertize his individuality' (p.23); 'des Esseintes avait créé des ameublements fastueusement étranges,'—'he had decorated and furnished the public rooms of his house with ostentatious oddity' (Page 26), 'cette intempérie de bâtisse qui l'avait autrefois battu!'—'that gale of human folly that had battered and buffeted him of old!' (p.213); 'avaient dû . . . se déprimer davantage dans les salons, . . . '—'must since have reached new depths of boredom in the drawing-room.' (Page 213)

Baldick's translation is quite obviously a work of love, and if occasionally in trying to make his favourite author palatable to the British he has overstepped the mark, it is probably not entirely his own fault but also that of the English reader, who so far has shown so little interest in this great Naturalist.

Canberra University College

E. KOCH-EMMERY

TWELVE FABLIAUX. Edited by T. B. W. Reid. Manchester. French Classics. Manchester University Press. pp.154.

THIS is an edition reaching the high standard which one has come to expect from such a source. There is a short, xxii page introduction, dealing with: The Old French Fabliau, The Transmission of the Fabliaux, The Language of the Scribe, and Treatment of the Text. This is concise and very helpful and accurate. There are over thirty pages of notes, and an equal length of glossary. The notes on each fabliau are prefaced by remarks on other MSS, Editions, Story and Language of Author. Many of the notes are racy in character; one can hardly fail to be electrified by the note on Fabliau 9, 11 338-9 'Et ja Damledieux ne le voie

Qui ja le vos consentira.'

It reads: 'May God never see him who . . . i.e. 'I'll be damned if I . . . '

The Fabliaux dealt with are all from MS F FR 19152 of the Bibliothèque Nationale. They comprise: *Du Vilain Asnier*, *D'un Preudome qui rescolt son compere de noier*, *Del Couvoiteus et de l'Envieus*, *Du Provoire qui menga les Mores*, *Des deus Anglois et de l'Anel*, *du Prestre qui ot Mere mal gre sien*, *Du Vilain qui conquist Paradis par Plait*, *des Tresces*, *Du Segretain Moine*, *D'Auberre la vielle Maquerelle*, *D'Aristote et d'Alixandre*, and *De Guillaume au Faucon*. They range in length from 815 lines in the case of *Du Segretain Moine*, to 51 in the case of *Du Vilain Asnier*.

In general, the selection—a selection conditioned, of course, by the MS chosen—is a good and representative one, worthy of study and capable of being enjoyed. One is inclined to question the value of the first fabliau, with its stercorous horse-laugh, and more especially of its place at the beginning. Perhaps the intention is that, to the undeniable earthiness of the genre, students should be early inured. Perhaps, however, 'manured' is the *mot juste*. Most students, however, will meet some old friends in the collection and be grateful for meeting some new ones.

The book is well presented; the type, though small, is clear and legible; and the general effect is pleasing. All in all, this is as instructive and enjoyable an introduction to the fabliaux as one is likely to find within such a modest compass.

University of Canterbury

GORDON S. TROUP

DICTIONARY OF FRENCH LITERATURE, edited by Sidney D. Braun, *Philosophical Library, New York, 1859.*

THE OXFORD COMPANION TO FRENCH LITERATURE, compiled and edited by Sir Paul Harvey and J. E. Heseltine, *Oxford, 1958.*

SINCE these two reference works have come to hand simultaneously, it seems convenient to link them in a review. It would have been even more convenient if they had arrived in December and could thus have been entrusted to some colleague about to depart for Europe on study leave. For who would not agree with Aldous Huxley that the ideal reading for a long journey is a volume or two of an encyclopaedia? Surely then the ideal reviewer of these *Companions* would be a scholar on a long sea voyage and not the present writer who has had to turn to these volumes amid lecture preparation, essay reading, committee meetings and all the other ills that academic flesh is heir to. Thus he cannot claim to have perused every one of the 771 pages of Sir Paul's compilation nor every one of the 362 of Professor Braun's; he has, however, be it said in exculpation, sampled both works diligently and over a fair area, he has consulted both for information in his recent reading of and his recent writing upon French literature. Moreover upon mature consideration, the present reviewer, harassed though he may be by other duties, is in the end more fitted to judge than the scholar on a long sea voyage. The former is able to use the works as they are meant to be used, as tools in the study of French literature; the latter, though he would have infinite leisure to peruse them thoroughly, would use them merely to distract himself from the monotony of an empty ocean, copious meals and tedious companions.

Indeed the traveller is likely to prefer Braun to Harvey and to proclaim the former's superiority, even though there is no doubt that Harvey's *Companion* is an infinitely better tool. Braun's *Dictionary*, however, makes for interesting reading; his team of contributors (some of them scholars of repute) have not scrupled to express their personalities in the articles asked of them, to air their particular opinions, to give their peculiar vision of the subject in question. They can be both stimulating and revealing (e.g. the article *Romanticism*), they are always provocative, even if sometimes idiotic (e.g. the article *Classicism*). But the information that Braun provides for the enquiring student, the verifying research worker, is not only more fragmentary than it need be, but also too often grossly misleading.

Sir Paul Harvey's work makes much duller reading and his personal tastes, his prejudices can only be guessed at. He is a born dictionary-maker and cultivates the neutrality, the soberness, the attentiveness to detail of the great compilers. He informs, he does not persuade. He has no passions, unless it be for dictionaries and the men who make them (the article *Dictionaries and encyclopaedias* is admirably handled, exhaustive, informative and superbly written). But there is no denying that on the whole the work lacks zest; his *Companion to Classical Studies* is much more enjoyable and is one of the best bedside books in the world. One suspects that Sir Paul was a prim and proper man but that more than primness was needed to quell the gods and goddesses of antiquity. On the other hand his primness was perfectly capable of coping with mere unbelievers and sinners in Christian France. Thus in the résumé of *Candide*, no mention is made of the old crone, the Pope's daughter with only one buttock. Surely to make this omission is to do to *Candide* what was done to the Pope's daughter. Again we are told that Aucassin refused to go to heaven without Nicolette. But this misses the whole point. Aucassin refused to go to heaven full stop; but he was quite

prepared to go to hell provided he had his Nicolette with him. Be it said in passing, the early medieval period is rather unsurely treated, both by Sir Paul and those who revised his text and read the proofs. The article *Romans bretons* is a tissue of 'anti-Celtic origin' nonsense. True, it is possible that Chrétien did draw *Erec* and *Yvain* 'out of his head' just as he did *Cligès*, but it is probable that he did not. Both possibilities could have been mentioned, but Sir Paul seems to have read Bruce and left it at that; which is unfortunate since the 'romans bretons' are a notorious field of controversy.

It is perhaps Sir Paul's primness, his distrust of 'Bohemianism' that leads him to neglect the arts of painting and music. The articles dealing with these fields are meagre and inadequate, though it must be said that Janet Heseltine is more liberal and enlightened in her attitude towards the fine arts. Whereas Sir Paul dismisses Chardin in two lines (yet what would Diderot's *Salons* be without him?) and makes no mention of Falconet, one finds, on the other hand, quite a reasonable coverage of important artists and musicians of the 19th and 20th centuries with their relations to literature duly noted.

Even the eccentrics whose biographies the dust cover promises us are exceedingly difficult to find in Sir Paul's territory, but rather easier to come upon in Janet Heseltine's (the delightful catalogue under *Literary Isms* should not be missed). For a time the present writer was inclined to forgive Sir Paul his primness and properness, and the narrowness of his interests; his refusal to go beyond 1800 seemed to mark him as a profoundly civilized man. Here was one who would have no truck with Romanticism and its posterity, no dealings on that market where counterfeit coinage buys adulterated and falsely labelled merchandise; here was a man of taste and sensibility who declined to be seen alive in the sanatoria of Romanticism, the sordid apartment houses of Realism, the cluttered museums of Parnassianism, the opium dens of Symbolism, the lunatic asylums of Surrealism, the shady hotels of Existentialism. Alas, the preface informs us that Sir Paul did make one excursion beyond 1800, namely, the article *Bergson*. Was it to scourge this arch-Romantic, this fertile source of intellectual and spiritual evil? No, the fiend was merely gently chided. One must conclude that if Sir Paul turned his back on modern times, it was out of modesty.

This is a desirable virtue in a dictionary-maker and ensures that the *Companion* is an efficient and useful tool. It is true that there are omissions, there are fields, aspects, individuals which are scantily treated (why does the article *Universities* stop with the Revolution?), errors of interpretation (the explanation of the term 'libertin' in the article *Libertins* is most unsatisfactory), errors of fact (the Dîners Magny survived only until 1865 or so, certainly not until 1875; Turgenev was invited once as a guest to the Magny but regularly attended the Dîners des Cinq in the 1870's). But these sins of omission and commission are not so numerous as to move one, as Bayle was moved by Moreri, to compile another dictionary. All in all, Harvey and Heseltine have succeeded well in their aim: to gather together, to arrange methodically and to make accessible the innumerable pieces of information which are often required for a proper understanding and a proper enjoyment of French literature, biographies of major and minor writers, handy synopses of major works and historically significant minor ones, surveys of the development of the main literary genres and the main literary movements (rarely satisfactory, but the task of describing adequately such complex phenomena in the limited available space is impossible; they do their best by listing essential facts and inviting the enquirer to go to the original texts to form his own judgment or arrive at his own definition of such terms as Classicism and Romanticism), descriptions of political, social and

educational institutions which have a bearing on French literature, and so on. In the accomplishment of this task they have done as well as we have any right to expect and there is no doubt their work will find a deserved place upon the bookshelves of French scholars.

Professor Braun's volume, on the other hand, will in all probability meet a less enviable fate. Unlike Harvey, who offers a dictionary of useful information about French literature, Braun attempts a direct description and an evaluation of French literature within the framework of an alphabetical dictionary. Had he had ten times the space he has been given by his publisher (300-400 pages), he might have had some chance of success. However, not only is his space hopelessly inadequate for his aim, but also some of his contributors and indeed he himself are not, like Sir Paul, born dictionary-makers. True, the problem they have set themselves, to annotate and, at the same time, to judge French literature, is insoluble. Inevitably they fall between two stools, but it must be said that more often than not they fall in a particularly clumsy and irritating way.

In the first place, they lack a method. Most of the biographies are a jumble of pure information and literary judgments which in the end leave the reader unsatisfied. The article *Jacques de Lacretelle*, twenty-two lines in length, though it attempts to describe the nature of Lacretelle's novels and give a resumé of *La Monnaie de plomb*, does this so inadequately that the only useful information one gleans from the article is an incomplete list of Lacretelle's work. Talvert and Place or Thème and his continuators would provide much more information.

Secondly, the desire to evaluate as well as to annotate has entailed a great deal of space being given to the major authors and the omission of the minor ones. Thus, Braun offers information about Molière, but if one wants to know who Xavier Marmier was, when he lived, what he wrote, Braun cannot help you. This is unfortunate, as one is much more likely to want details about Marmier than one is about Molière. The latter is well treated by the standard manuals, whereas poor Marmier is lucky to get a footnote from Lanson.

Thirdly, their documentation is often inadequate and careless. To give the title of Molière's *Dom Juan* as *Don Juan* is a trifling error, but dictionary-makers should be scrupulous about such details and one feels such minor slovenliness is symptomatic. Thus, whilst Sir Paul's article *Romans bretons* will annoy 'Celtic origin' men, Braun's article on the same subject will send Celts and anti-Celts into paroxysms of rage. It is hopelessly inadequate and misleading. Quite obviously Braun has consulted no reputable scholar on either side of the question. The result is pathetic. Again, Braun does not realize that Somaize has been discredited as a source of information on *préciosité*. He need only have read Adam's standard history. Alas, no real effort is required to discover these 'bloomers'. What then lies undiscovered by the present reviewer?

Fourthly, Braun seems to address himself specifically to the American undergraduate. This is most unfortunate. In order not to confuse the young mind, he shows a regrettable tendency to simplify complex subjects, to be dogmatic on subjects where one can only weigh probabilities. Compare the articles on *lais*: Braun states they were 'short stories' in verse originally sung by Welsh bards on the 'rote'. That the origin of *lais* is anything but certain will be seen if the Oxford *Companion* is consulted. It is appalling to think that the young should be fed with such absurdities rather than expose them to the doubts and uncertainties which scholarship inevitably brings forth.

## Book Reviews

Fifthly, the need to hold the attention of a youth easily distracted by more immediately pleasurable activities than reading French literature has exercised a dreadful influence on the English style of the contributors. Thus in the article *Molière* we find Molière's activities in the provinces described thus: 'During this period he not only profited as an astute observer of the laboratory of life . . .' Laboratory of life, indeed! This might be forgiven if it slipped out in a lecture to first or second year Pass students, provided that the lecturer had been drinking heavily the night before. On a printed page it is quite intolerable. Sometimes, however, the writing is spontaneously bad, i.e. its badness is not the consequence of an effort to rouse a reader from lethargy or indifference. In the article on *Langues romanes*, though it is one of the most workmanlike and competent of the dictionary, one meets such a sentence as: 'Due to the control of Roumania and the region of the Danube by the Bulgars, beginning possibly as early as the middle of the seventh century, Roumania owed its political and ecclesiastical organization and its civilization of the Middle Ages to them, and it was from the Bulgars that the Roumanians received their earliest literature.' No editor should let a contributor get away with such a monstrosity.

All in all, the sad conclusion must be that Professor Braun has failed. We feel before his work, as Bayle felt before Moreri: let us do this task properly, let us compile another dictionary. In two respects only does Braun equal or surpass Sir Paul (let it be said, in passing, that it is doubtful whether the inclusion of the post-war period by Braun is an advantage over Harvey). Firstly, the general articles on genres and literary movements are often very well done and, as has been said, sometimes make stimulating reading. Thus Germaine Brée on Existentialism is quite good, Albert George on Romanticism likewise. For all that, the perusal of a dictionary article is not the ideal method of becoming properly acquainted with the concepts which are attached to words such as 'Romanticism' and 'Existentialism'.

Secondly, Braun provides brief bibliographical references at the end of most of his articles. The works selected are not always what the present writer would have chosen, but there is no doubt that these references could be of great help to the student and the layman who do not wish to wander in the labyrinths of cumbrous bibliographies. Sir Paul merely gives an appendix on standard bibliographies but does not mention monographs in the body of his work. It is a pity. But perhaps subconsciously Sir Paul thought of bibliographies as resembling the voices said to lure travellers from the road into the trackless wastes of the Gobi desert, thought of them as tending to lead the scholar away from the neat compartments that dictionary-makers build up. One detects a note of glee in the terse final sentence of the article on François Grudé de la Croix du Maine (1552-1592), an early bibliographer: 'He was assassinated at Tours.'

University of Tasmania

I. H. SMITH

FRENCH PRONUNCIATION AND DICTION. Jean C. Batt. London, Macmillan & Co., 1958. pp.146.

THE field of French phonetic writing is one in which small books are criticised for their omissions, and large books for their indigestibility. Miss Jean Batt has written a medium-sized book which, by its sound scholarship, planning and style goes a long way to fill the need of teachers and serious students for a practical manual of French pronunciation.

There is enough distinction and flexibility in the style to ensure that the book leans to the humanistic, rather than the scientific side; but the acoustic and physiological facts are soundly presented. Indeed, the refreshing fact demonstrated is that it is possible to be scientifically erudite without ceasing to be readable, and concise without being dense.

The plan goes forward on the inner logic of the subject. First, the phonetic symbols are set out, with well-chosen examples. The 'broad' notation is used, with a minimum of diacritic signs. Then comes an introductory chapter on the value of the phonetic method, which is sanely and cogently argued. The succeeding chapters are headed: The Vowels: a Classification. The Vowels: Rules of Orthographic Representation and Articulation. The Sound-Group. Elision of Neutral 'E' (the most felicitous name, this, for the Protean vowel). Semi-Vowels or Semi-Consonants. The Consonantal System. Assimilation. Liaison. Intonation or the Musical Elements of Speech. There are three appendices: Notes on the Reading of Poetry, Passages for Reading Phonetic Script, and Words Frequently Mispronounced. This plan results in a tidy treatment, with a minimum of repetitions, anticipations and 'renvois en arrière'.

Nine records have been prepared for use in conjunction with this book, and can be obtained separately from the French Department of the University of Tasmania. Without having heard the records, one can say that the illustrative words and passages chosen are admirably suited to the purpose. Some of the examples could be used with advantage by beginners, others by School Certificate pupils, others by more advanced pupils or students.

In typography and general setting-out, the book is open to some criticism. There is no bracketing-off of phonetic symbols, and as these are not set in distinctive type faces, there is occasional confusion as to whether phonetic or nomic spelling is referred to. On page 36 it is stated, 'ē is the nasal form of ε, but ẽ lies between ɔ and o'. This not quite correct statement, besides being modified at the bottom of page 37, is belied by the diagram on page 36, which shows the nasalised o's closer together than the e's. These, however, are minor defects. The total impression is of a wonderfully complete, readable and practical guide to a difficult and vital subject.

University of Canterbury

GORDON S. TROUP

DRAMA OF THE GROUP. P. J. Norrish. *Cambridge University Press*, 1958, pp. ix + 171.

THE early nineteen hundreds in France, odd as it may appear, were a period of intense if immature collective consciousness. The *universités populaires*, the emergence of an influential Socialist party under Jaurès, the humanitarian emphases of Tolstoy and Dostoievsky, the social theories of Georges Sorel, Gabriel Tarde and Durkheim, the poetic evocations of the Belgians Eekhoud, Maeterlinck and Verhaeren, and the tremendous convulsions of the *Affaire*, brought home to a bewildered bourgeoisie the cogent claims of the common man. Péguy's *Marcel* and *Le triomphe de la république* are impregnated with it, as is also the work of Charles-Louis Philippe. Jules Romains, with his 'unanimité', belongs in this company. Dr Norrish's book, the first of its kind in English, is a careful and well-documented study of this theory as manifested in the dramatic work of a most prolific author. The whole of parts II and III of his work is devoted, with scrupulous scholarship, to a close scrutiny of the individual plays, from *L'armée*

*dans la ville* (1911) to *Grâce encore pour la terre* (1941). The conclusion drawn (pp.156 ff.) is that, while unanimism 'cannot claim to be original as a system of thought', the author's exploitation of it as a study of human groups has been consistent, brilliantly penetrating and technically most competent. Its short-comings spring partly from the fact that Romains, even in the Ecole Normale days, was always an 'abstracteur' and a 'cérébral', and on the other hand that the whole theory he seeks to elaborate is, of its very nature, unproven and possibly beyond proof.

Dr Norrish's long and thorough introduction deals with the 'precursors' of unanimism without coming to the point of calling them sources. (Indeed, the work of Verhaeren, which he examined in an article in *French Studies*, January 1957, and the influence of which is attested by correspondence from Romains himself in the Fonds Verhaeren at the Bibliothèque Royale, Brussels, comes very close to this.) But it is perhaps disingenuous of Dr Norrish to add, in his Preface: 'The reason for this, apart from lack of space, is that the critic of unanimism must allow for the fact that Romains will admit to little direct influence on his work. It is well known, for example, that he emphatically denied the slightest influence of the sociologist Durkheim on him. It is therefore not possible to suggest sources of this kind without seeming to accuse Romains at the same time of a deliberate falsehood or an unfortunate slip of memory.'

University of Canterbury

R. T. SUSSEX

THE IRONIC GERMAN. A STUDY OF THOMAS MANN. Erich Heller. London, Secker & Warburg, 1958, pp.298.

THIS is a critical study of Thomas Mann's works which would surely have delighted the novelist himself. The style of the book so resembles that of Mann that parts of it could have been written by him. In content, the work shows that 'desperate uncertainty concerning the significance of anything' (to quote Heller himself, p.210), which we associate with the content of Mann's own novels. Heller is the most cautious of critics. Having analyzed *Doktor Faustus*, he tells us on p.276, 'As a work of literature, *Doctor Faustus* is the defeat of the critic'. And again, later on the same page: 'But such entertaining interpreters' trifles apart, the novel is a fortress against criticism'. His chapter on *Der Zauberberg* consists of a series of questions and answers. Neither of the disputants seems to represent Heller's own view-point, and the reader has the weird feeling that the author is on both sides at once. As for *Felix Krull*, Heller feels there would be a risk of monotony in its discussion (p.284), 'and in the case of *Felix Krull* we shall for once not take it (the risk)'.

Heller's caution in 'explaining' Mann is to his credit as a critic. There have been too many books and articles written on Mann (enough to fill a medium-sized library!) which attribute to him a settled view-point on this or that philosophical, political or purely human problem. But Heller wisely explains, and repeatedly stresses, Mann's 'aesthetic philosophy which . . . holds that the artist is barred from any particular belief by that comprehensive vision, the passion for affirming whatever can be made to yield to the principle of form' (p.148). Heller regards this aesthetic philosophy as typical of most artists and quotes, for example, Keats: "'The poetical Character . . . has no character'" (p.134) and T. S. Eliot: "'The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of person-

ality''' (p.82). Heller's sanity as a critic is shown likewise by his understanding of Mann's 'unio mystica' with Goethe, and by his classification of *Lotte in Weimar* as neither fiction nor truth, but a blend of both.

Few critics will quarrel with the author's assertion that 'the Tonio-experience was so compelling that it claimed a large share in almost all the future productions of Thomas Mann' (p.77). But this does not mean that the novelist always treated the theme in the same way. The traditional interpreters of *Der Zauberberg* maintain, and so does Heller, that Hans Castorp begins as a useful member of society and 'ends approaching the state of being an *Originalgenie*' (p.213). But is not the reverse the case? Hans is surely, at the end of the novel, rather more of a philistine than he was at the beginning. In similar fashion, the role and fate of Joachim and Clawdia (to name only two) do not appear, if properly understood, to bear out the conventional *Bürger-Künstler* interpretation of the story. This is part of Mann's 'irony', a form of expression which, according to Heller, cannot be defined (see pp.235 and 236).

Few critics of Mann's works will agree with everything in *The Ironic German*. There are small weaknesses such as inaccuracies and mistranslations (e.g. 'Ich habe es gleich gemerkt' is translated as 'I have always dimly felt that myself' (p.166).) Some critics may object to the title. 'Ironic' has in English a meaning little related to Mann's use of the word 'ironisch'. Not everyone may agree (as does this reviewer) with Heller in the importance he attaches to the *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* in Mann's development. But *The Ironic German* is still in many ways a brilliant book, perhaps the best that has been written on Mann to date. Heller knows Mann's writings so well that he has succeeded almost in identifying himself with his subject. And he thus tells us more about Thomas Mann by implication than most earlier critics have ever done by exegesis.

University of Auckland

J. A. ASHER

DEATH AND THE PLOWMAN or THE BOHEMIAN PLOWMAN. Johannes von Saaz. Translated from the modern German version of Alois Bernt by Ernest N. Kirmann. *University of North Carolina*, 1958; pp.xviii, 40.

IN the 'translator's preface' to his slim volume, Mr Kirmann points out that 'the present work is intended for the perceptive English speaking reader and the student of comparative literature in translation'. He applies to his translation the aphorism *traduttore, traditore* which, he appeals, must apply to all translation. 'The translator can only pray that he has understood his text and rendered it to the best of his ability' (p.x). Following the translator's preface, the 'Preface to the German Edition' (of Bernt) is given in translation, wherein a certain amount of historical background to the original text and its author is presented in somewhat extravagant eulogies. Kirmann states earlier in his translator's preface that he offers 'no apologies for having based my translation on Bernt. The basic work was done before more recent modernizations and dramatizations appeared in Europe and, in any case, before I was aware of their existence'. Thus from the first, the author is on the defensive against possible criticism of his work—and understandably so, when one comes to the main work itself, the 'translation of a translation' which follows Bernt's preface.

The first major weakness of the translation is that it is faulty. Secondly,

it is translated into faulty English. All readers would, of course, be benevolent enough to realize the great difficulties attendant upon translation where the translator's aim is to keep strictly to the word and spirit of the original: nevertheless, there is much to be said for Aristotle's opinion that the poet should use the language of his time if he wants to be heard. Kirrman has chosen to use archaic language to reproduce the atmosphere of this mediaeval *disputatio*, often with most odd effect.

Taking chapters at random, in order to illustrate these two serious defects in method, we find (Ch.4, p.3): 'Forsooth, rarely hath it been Our lot to lead home a woman of such fair countenance and steadfast mind. Lest she be the one thou speakes, We know of nary another.' Comparing this effort with the M. O'Connor Walshe version of the manuscript text (ed. J. von Tepl, *Der Ackermann aus Böhmen*, London 1951), we find that a good deal of 'embroidery' has been effected, and a good deal of accuracy has been sacrificed to create 'atmosphere':

'Werlich so stet und so geheure kam uns zu handen selten. Es sei denn die selbe die du meinst: anders wisse wir keine.' Or again (Ch.7, p.6):

'Could I but damn, could I but scold, could I but scoff that Thou wouldst be worse off than blighted, Thou wouldst well be served for Thy snide doings unto me.'

'Kunde ich euch gefluchen, kunde ich euch geschelten, kunde ich euch verpfien, das euch wirser dann ubel geschehe, das hettet ir snodiglich wol an mir verdient.' Or (Ch.15, p.13): 'However much Thou wouldst enloak Thyself, I do know this: that because of Thy blustering displeasure I must fain be wanting my honorable and comely wife'—'Wie sere ich euch beschonet, doch weiss ich, das ich der erenwoll und schonen von eurer swinden ungenade wegen kummerlich enberen muss.' As even the most elementary student of German could tell, the 'translation' departs somewhat from the original!

The conclusion one must draw is that, as a contribution towards an understanding of 'the most profound prose writing of German Humanism' (Bernt's preface), Kirrman's *Plowman* is doubtless not without some worth to 'the student of comparative literature in translation'—whatever that may mean! Those to whom 'the first bloom and at the same time the finest fruit of the awakening of Man out of the narrow confines of the Middle Ages' (Bernt) would otherwise have remained inaccessible, are here given an opportunity to become acquainted with what Ehrismann has judged 'eines der weisheitsvollsten Werke des deutschen Mittelalters' (Ehris. Gesch. Schlussband, p.655). But serious students of Middle High German literature and perceptive English-speaking readers will be perturbed by the translator's shortcomings and dismiss his work as 'wirser dann ubel'! (An earlier English translation of the *Ackermann aus Böhmen* entitled *Death and the Ploughman* was made by Dr K. W. Maurer, London, 1947.)

University of Canterbury

A. N. BROOKS

THE SONGS OF NEIDHART VON REUENTAL. A. T. Hatto and R. J. Taylor. *Manchester University Press*, 1959.

THIS book includes a practical edition of the seventeen songs of Neidhart, these being the only songs in which we can be sure of his combined effort as poet and composer.

The authors are quite willing to admit that the art of Minnesang was

such an obscure one that a modern edition can hardly claim to be called authoritative; nevertheless this kind of publication—a simply laid-out version of the songs in modern notation, followed by a comprehensive commentary on tunes and text—would appear to be the most suitable kind of stimulus to provoke interest in this early music.

From the musical point of view the most misleading feature to the general reader would appear to be the lack of any suggested accompaniment to the songs. It is always evident in medieval secular music that by far the most frequently used scales are the D-D and C-C modes, and the repertoire of Minnesang shows no exception to this, except for a slight preference for the C-C mode—our modern major scale. Practically all melody written in this scale requires harmonic support, and most medieval minstrel-songs had this supplied by diverse instruments—often a freely improvised accompaniment. In spite of these accompaniments being unwritten, it would seem as unfair to Neidhart to publish his songs nowadays without support as it would to publish Dowland or Purcell songs with no lute tablature transcription or figured-bass realization.

As far as the notation of the melodies is concerned, good sense has been shown in making use of compound time where musical and verbal metre suggest it; so often one finds any early music in three pulse measures constricted into short three pulse bars which are unnecessarily tiresome to the reader.

The translations of the original texts are particularly well done, and short paraphrases of the poems are given.

Like most medieval theorizing, the metrical formulae of the poems form a scientific, symbolic, and even superstitious kind of study, which is analysed here in ample detail. This part of the book would be of interest only to medieval specialists. One feels here that, in comparison with the relatively easy-going improvisatory art of the troubadours of France, this important early school of Teutonic musicians are beginning to treat the theoretical side of their art with Wagnerian thoroughness, but thoroughness inspired by artistry in the case of a musician of Neidhart's calibre.

The analytical part of the book may look reminiscent of Beckmesser, but the music will always remind us that the Meistersinger were musically in no way comparable to their great forbears the Minnesinger.

*University of Canterbury*

MICHAEL TOOVEY

O VEDECKEM POZNANI SOUDOBYCH JAZYKU (On the Scientific Study of Contemporary Languages) pp.299: published by the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, Department of Language and Literature, Prague, 1958.

THIS publication records the proceedings of a linguistic conference held in Prague during November, 1956: it contains the full texts of papers read, and short accounts of the subsequent discussions. The conference was opened by a non-specialist, the Oriental historian J. Prusek, who delivered some hard sayings to the assembled delegates. After paying a tribute to the distinguished past of Czech philology (especially as evinced by the activities of the pre-war Prague linguistic circle), he drew attention to a decline in recent years, which he attributed to some of the dogmatic attitudes adopted in the post-war period. With engaging candour he pointed out that quotations from political authorities had apparently been rated higher than a study of the facts, and scientific books had become stuffed with political

slogans: Marxist heresies had been pushed into Czech linguistics, and when these had been exploded by Stalin, the latter's remarks had immediately been exalted into a new absolute. He asked the conference to show that it was ready to get right away from dogmatism of any kind; above all to resolve that artistic and scientific questions would never again be settled by calling on political authority to intimidate opposition.

After listening to these refreshing sentiments the delegates turned their attention to the five main themes around which the work of the conference had been grouped. A central aim of the convenors had evidently been to consider fundamental questions of linguistic system, and to redefine the attitude of Czech philologists to structuralism. The topics were therefore generally related to this question, leading from general principles to particular applications: the topics were (1) Fundamentals of scientific grammar and questions of linguistic system, (2) Problems of linguistic development and the importance of the historical method for the scientific study of modern languages, (3) On the relationship of word and sentence, and questions of morphology, (4) Word formation and lexicon, (5) Stylistics. The conference closed with a speech by Professor Havránek, who pointed out that the historico-comparative method had received little attention at this conference only because a later conference (in 1957) was to consider this aspect of linguistics: the conference had apparently elicited general agreement on the basic theoretical issue; while recognising the undiminished importance of the historical approach, members were prepared to admit as no less important and scientific the synchronic approach to language, considered as a structural unity with a complex inter-relationship of the parts to each other and to the whole. No doubt Havránek had in mind the paper presented by his colleague Professor Horálek, on 'The possibilities and tasks of descriptive linguistics', a paper in which he had taken up the cudgels for structuralism and deplored the exaggerated attacks made on it in the past: something of a rear-guard action had been fought by Prof. Trávníček ('The importance of the historical method in modern linguistics')—*inter alia* he made a claim which would make many American structuralists shudder, when he objected to linguistics being treated purely as a descriptive science and asked why it should not claim to be prescriptive, in protecting the language from both zealous 'purists' and from neologisms which weakened its force and clarity of expression.

An interesting feature of the conference was the high proportion of papers concerned with Oriental languages: as usual on such occasions some of the papers did not seem very closely related to the central themes and were of quite specialised interest. Here is a brief selection of subjects on which papers were delivered: Traditionalism in Chinese grammar: Notes on modern Greek: the infinitive in Bantu: the Slavonic verb: Basic questions of Lexicology: Some syntactical questions in the Germanic languages. Perhaps the main interest for Western philologists in the conference lies in the evidence of an apparent change of attitude to the new linguistics. It would be easy to under-estimate the quality of post-war Czech philology, not all of which was disturbed by ideological polemics, but it will be interesting to observe whether a new structuralist school of linguistics will emerge in Prague, which, because of its brilliant pre-war contribution to the theory of phonemics, may be regarded as the cradle of the new linguistics.

ASPECTS OF TRANSLATION. Studies in Communication 2. Communication Research Centre, University College, London, *Secker and Warburg*, 1958. vii, 145 pp.

THE papers which make up this collection were for the most part delivered as public lectures at University College, London. The first two, by Professor Leonard Forster and Dr L. W. Tancock, set out some of the general problems which the translator, particularly of works of a literary kind, must contend with. Not unnaturally, neither produces any cut and dried solution to these problems, but they signpost the pitfalls with elegance and good humour. Other papers deal with more specific problems encountered in translating Greek philosophical writings (D. J. Furley). Old Chinese scientific and technical texts (J. Needham), translation by machine (Dr Booth) and conference interpreting (R. Glémat). A final paper by Professor C. Rabin studies the linguistics of translation. This, in the midst of a somewhat fearsome display of algebraic symbols, puts forward some interesting notions, e.g. that there may exist within a language a *translation stock* built up as a result of continuous contact through translation with another language, thus making the translator's task rather easier. The contributors approach their common subject from a variety of points of view, some tending to regard it as an almost mechanical activity, others viewing it as something in the order of a creative art. This stimulating diversity of opinion stems from the variety of ends which translation serves. Different problems arise at different levels, and the interest of this volume lies in the broadness of its survey, rather than in the offering of any comprehensive, or even individual, solution.

*University of Canterbury*

N. M. LEOV

## ASSOCIATION NEWS

### COMPARATIVE STUDIES IN SOCIETY AND HISTORY

It is announced from the Hague by the publishers, Mouton & Co., that an international quarterly has been founded, with the above title, 'to serve as a forum for presentation of research that lends itself to comparative study, with particular reference to the explanation of stability and of change in social organization or in ways of thought and expression.' The sponsoring institutions are the Universities of Chicago, California, Columbia, Pennsylvania, Princeton, Roosevelt and Rutgers. The editorial address is at the University of Chicago, Chicago 37, Illinois, U.S.A.

### ABSTRACTS OF ENGLISH STUDIES

The above-named monthly began to appear in January 1958, launched by a group of University of Colorado teachers headed by Lewis Sawin and was adopted later in 1958 as one of its official publications by the National Council of Teachers of English (U.S.A.). The purpose of the magazine 'is to present to its readers one-paragraph digests of serious, scholarly articles on English and American literature, speech linguistics and philology, and semantics. It is obviously not intended to substitute for or compete with any magazine, but rather to call to readers' attention worthwhile articles that they might otherwise overlook.' The annual subscription is four dollars.

## *Association News*

Orders may be sent to NCTE, 704 South Sixth Street, Champaign, Illinois, U.S.A.

### DE CARLE VISITING LECTURESHIP, UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO

Professor and Mrs T. B. L. Webster have been visiting the University of Otago, Dunedin, under the terms of the De Carle Foundation for a visiting lecturer. Professor Webster is Professor of Greek at University College, London, and Mrs Webster is Reader in Classics and English History at Birkbeck College, London. (An article by Mrs Webster is published elsewhere in this issue.) Professor Webster delivered the De Carle lectures on Greek Art and Literature 700-530 B.C. in Dunedin this year and the lectures have now been published and will subsequently be reviewed in AUMLA No. 12. Professor and Mrs Webster were able to attend the Conference of N.Z. University Teachers of Classics held in Christchurch at the University of Canterbury in the May vacation, and lectured on this occasion as well as on a subsequent visit to Christchurch at the end of June. After visiting Christchurch, they proceeded to the University of Sydney in the month of July.

### SIXTH BIENNIAL CONGRESS, A.U.L.L.A., UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND, JANUARY 30th — FEBRUARY 3rd, 1959

A highly successful congress was held at the University of New England, Armidale, during the summer and attended by a very representative company of delegates from all the Australian Universities and from three of the New Zealand Universities. The following are some of the matters of note arising from the Congress.

#### 1 *F.I.L.L.M.*

It was resolved that Professor J. C. Mahoney, of the Department of French, University of Queensland, be appointed as the Association's official delegate to the F.I.L.L.M. Congress to be held at Liège, Belgium, in August/September, 1960.

#### 2 *Newsletter*

The responsibility for the newsletter having been for four years in the hands of the University of New England, it was resolved that the duplication and circulation of the newsletter be undertaken, for the period 1959-61, by the University of Queensland under the Editorship of Dr K. Leopold.

#### 3 *Seventh Biennial Congress*

It was resolved that the Association accept the invitation of the University of Canterbury, to hold the seventh Congress at that University in Christchurch in January 1961. The fixing of the exact dates was referred to the Standing Committee (the Standing Committee has since fixed the date as January 18th-24th, 1961). It was also resolved that the theme for the general sessions be either Drama or The Lyric, but that the various language sections, through their convenors, should be left to make their own decisions as to the theme for their own papers and discussions.

#### *4 Oriental and other languages*

It was resolved that the Standing Committee make an informal approach to teachers of Oriental and Pacific languages in the Language Departments of Australia and New Zealand and invite them to join the activities of the Association and create a special section for their particular discipline.

#### *5 New membership*

Several cases having arisen during the previous two years of applicants for membership whose qualifications did not quite fall within the terms of the Association's constitution, it was resolved that the Standing Committee should have discretionary power to admit to membership retired members of University staffs who had not previously been members of the Association.

#### *6 French Academic Visitor*

The previous negotiations pursued between 1954 and 1959 having failed to secure the co-operation of the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee, it was resolved that a further approach be made to the Committee for its support in bringing a French academic visitor to Australia and New Zealand in 1959 or 1960 for a brief stay in each of the University centres within a period of three months. It was also resolved that exploratory conversations be undertaken in Paris with a view to finding out further names of eminent scholars who would be prepared to visit the Antipodes in this connection.

#### *7 The Office Bearers for 1959-61*

The following office bearers were appointed:

President	Prof. R. T. Sussex
Vice-President	Prof. D. P. Scales

#### *Standing Committee*

Chairman	Prof. R. T. Sussex
Secretary	Dr H. Maclean
Treasurer	Dr R. P. Meijer
	Mr H. Dow
	Mr K. F. Quinn

#### *University Representatives*

Sydney	Dr A. P. Treweek
Melbourne	Prof. R. F. Jackson
Adelaide	Dr D. van Abbé
Tasmania	Miss J. Batt
Queensland	Dr K. Leopold
Western Australia	Mr A. King
New England	Miss I. Blanche
Canberra	Dr E. Koch-Emmery
Newcastle	Mr D. C. Muecke
University of N.S.W.	Mr P. Elkin
Auckland	Prof. A. C. Keys
Canterbury	Prof. R. T. Sussex
Otago	Prof. G. R. Manton
Wellington	Prof. I. Gordon

## Association News

### Section Convenors

Classics	Mr K. F. Quinn
English	Prof. C. J. Horne
French	Prof. D. P. Scales
Germanic Languages	Mr H. Wiemann
Russian	Dr D. Grishin
Science Languages	Dr A. Rodgers

### Editorial Board

Editor	Prof. R. T. Sussex
Associate-Editor	Prof. I. H. Smith
	Mr K. F. Quinn
	Prof. F. M. Todd
	Dr J. Smit

### 8 Details of Lectures

The following are the speakers and the titles of the addresses given during the Congress.

MR A. KING: Literature as a University subject.

MR M. N. KELLY: The Language of New Comedy.

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR K. MCKENZIE: Furphy and Shakespeare.

MR A. DENAT: L'art poétique après Valéry.

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR K. C. MASTERMAN: The Subjunctive Mood in Latin.

DR L. TAUMAN: La Méthode de Leonard de Vinci et le Septuor de Vinteuil.

DR V. POLITI: Aspects and Trends in Modern Italian Literature.

PROFESSOR G. R. MANTON: Vergil and the Greek Epic.

MR S. L. GOLDBERG: Joyce and the Artist's Fingernails.

PROFESSOR A. C. KEYS: Linguistic Contacts of French and German.

MR K. H. WATERS: The Literary Propaganda of Augustus.

DR K. J. GOESCH: The Effectiveness of Phonetic Methods in the teaching of Oral French.

DR L. BODI: Marxism and German Literary History.

MRS N. CHRISTESEN: Boris Pasternak.

MR H. DOW: The Secret Agent: personal isolation in Conrad.

PROFESSOR R. T. SUSSEX: Jacques Rivière and the Nouvelle Revue Française.

DR B. COGLAN: Methods of Interpretation of Modern German Poetry.

MR I. LONIE: Propertius and the Alexandrians.

MR D. C. MUECKE: C. R. Jury—A Modern Ironist.

DR D. VAN ABBE: Periodisation of Twentieth Century German Literature.

MR R. ST. LEON: Some Critical Problems associated with Hermann Kasack's *Das grosse Netz*.

DR R. G. A. DE BRAY: A new technique for the analysis of pitch in 'tone languages' and some results obtained for the pitch accents of Serbo-Croatian in connected speech (with illustrations).

MR K. F. QUINN: Lyrical Form.

MR L. R. CHAMBERS: Anglicisms of Syntax in Contemporary French.

DR G. M. BONNIN: The Myth Trilogy in Max Frisch's *Stiller*.

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR F. J. H. LETTERS: Dante and the Classics.

## Books Received

- MR D. B. O. BIGGINS: The novels of William Golding.  
 DR I. P. BARKO: Charles Maurras and Julien Benda: Two attempts to Restore Classicism.  
 MR P. M. WETHERILL: French Novelists and Ideology (20th Century): Malraux and Camus.  
 MR J. R. JONES: Modern Versions of the 'Antigone' Theme.  
 MR J. B. BESTON: Victorian Gloom in Four Major Novels (Vanity Fair, Bleak House, Middlemarch, The Way We Live Now).  
 MR J. M. WOLFE: Rilke's Epitaph.  
 MISS J. M. RANDALL: Le Théâtre de l'inexprimé.  
 DR H. MACLEAN: The Structure of Georg Kaiser's Drama.  
 MR A. FRENCH: The Poetry of Vitezlav Nezval.

## BOOKS RECEIVED

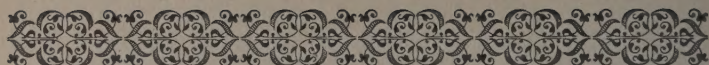
(\* Reviewed in this issue)

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 \*BOTTRALL, Margaret. *Everyman a Phoenix—Studies in 17th Century Autobiography*, John Murray, 1958, pp.174.  
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 \*HATTO, A. T. and TAYLOR, R. J. *The Songs of Neidhart von Reuenthal*, Manchester University Press, 1958, pp.112.

## Books Received

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